

IMPLICATIONS OF DENOMINATIONAL PERCEPTION OF DIVORCE FOR THE
MINISTRY OF NAVAL CHAPLAINS

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Divorced ministers face the possible loss of credentials. Since denominations have varying practices regarding divorced clergy and non-clergy, a resource listing how divorced is handled would be helpful in ministering to those who are divorced. This research began by surveying what the Bible says about marriage and divorce, and reviewing the literature covering the four prominent views of divorce and remarriage. Twenty-three active duty Navy Chaplains were surveyed and two focus groups conducted to determine how denominations approach the issue of divorce. A pamphlet was created and a study guide developed to serve as a resource.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM AND SETTING

...We will effectively deliver religious ministry, strengthen our people and commands, and create more resilient military and civilian personnel and their families...People are the foundation of the Naval Service. Serving our people remains our #1 priority as we seek to enrich their lives by meeting their religious and pastoral care needs, inspiring hope, strengthening their spiritual well-being, and increasing their resilience and readiness.

—Margaret G. Kibben, Navy Chief of Chaplains¹

Navy Chaplains come from different denominations and religions to provide religious ministry to members of the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marines—collectively referred to as *sea services*. The Navy Chaplain Corps “is a religiously impartial governmental organization with no inherent theology of its own.”² When someone requires help regarding a specific belief, Chaplains refer the person to the appropriate Chaplain. Arguing the validity of the person’s belief is not part of the job. Chaplains adhere to the guiding principles of Naval Chaplaincy:

- We are faithful to our individual religious traditions and practices.
- We respect the right of others to hold spiritual beliefs and religious practices different from our own.
- We cooperate and collaborate in ministry.
- We are committed to the highest standards of morality and personal integrity.
- We are committed to professionalism in the performance of duty.³

This thesis-project is intended with these same principles in mind. It is not written to proclaim, discover, nor assert the *correct view* of divorce, but merely serves to identify

¹ Margaret G. Kibben, *The Chief of Navy Chaplains FY 2015 Annual Guidance* (Annual Guidance presented to all Navy Chaplains, September 25, 2014).

² Secretary of the Navy, *Professional Naval Chaplaincy*, Secretary of the Navy Instruction (SECNAVINST) 5351.1, April 21, 2011.

³ “Chaplain’s Guide to Professional Naval Chaplaincy,” United States Naval Chaplain Corps, November 2011, accessed January 17, 2015, http://www.public.navy.mil/bupersnpc/officer/communitymanagers/StaffCorps/Documents/CHC_Chaplains_Guide_to_PNC_-_21NOV11.pdf.

what various denominations believe and practice. No intention is made to disparage or debate different views. The purpose is to ultimately help those ministers who may be going through a divorce or have already endured a divorce.

Statistics on the divorce rate in America range from 40-50 percent to 3.6 marriages per 1,000 ending in divorce.⁴ Regardless of the source or method of calculation, divorce has a devastating impact on society. This has been true throughout Biblical and Church history. Divorce is mentioned three times in the book of Leviticus, five times in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses allowed a bill of divorcement early after the Israelites left Egypt (Duet. 24:1) and we can “assume that divorce was as prevalent in Israel then as in other ancient Near Eastern societies.”⁵ Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul gave teachings on divorce and addressed questions on the subject (Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40).

Church history shows the early Church Fathers had to address the issues of marital discord and divorce in their writings, as well as contend with local laws.⁶ Protestant Reformer Martin Luther wrote in 1529 “...every day we see marriages broken by the devil through adultery, unfaithfulness, discord, and all manner of ill.”⁷ His

⁴ Alan E. Kazdin, ed., *Encyclopedia of Psychology* (Oxford University Press, 2000), accessed January 14, 2015, <http://www.apa.org/pubs/books/4600100.aspx>; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed January 15, 2015, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage-divorce.htm>.

⁵ David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 23.

⁶ Alex R. G. Deasley, *Marriage & Divorce in the Bible and the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2000), 193-208.

⁷ Jane E. Strohl, “Luther on Marriage, Sexuality, and the Family.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, (June 2014): 172, accessed January 27, 2015,

reference to a daily occurrence indicates that the potential for divorce was common even then. In one of his early treatises, Luther also acknowledges the issue of domestic abuse and acknowledges that there are “rude, brutal, and unbearable husbands.”⁸ In his book, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practices*, Cornes list figures for several European countries, as well as America, showing an increase in divorce rates throughout the last two centuries.⁹

Adding to the confusion of understanding a Biblical perspective of divorce is the lack of information in Scripture. The Bible does not directly address the issue of spousal or child abuse, incarceration, or other situations so frequently encountered by those contemplating divorce. Scriptural teachings on divorce are presented through literature left to interpretation as to whether it is allegory or literal (i.e., Hosea), or in contextual relation to Jewish Law, which prescribed the stoning of a rebellious son (Deut. 21:18-21).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said he came to “fulfill the law” (Matt. 5:17) and equated anger with murder (Matt. 5:21-22), lust with adultery (Matt. 5:27-28), and the principle of non-resistance by saying to turn the other cheek, rather than defend oneself (5:38-42). Other passages addressing divorce in Scripture can be viewed as possible poetic phrasing (Mal. 2:16; Matt. 5:31) or addressing specific cultural situations

<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604708.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199604708-e-046>, 172.

⁸ Strohl, “Luther on Marriage,” 177.

⁹ Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice* (Farnham, UK: Mentor Imprint, 2012), 8-12.

(1 Corinthians 7) and not necessarily viewed as applying to today or as doctrinal principles.¹⁰

Turning attention from ambiguous terminologies such as “society” and “cultural” and focusing specifically on the church, it is clear the church is not exempt, and neither is the minister. A survey of 1,050 ministers revealed 38% were either divorced or going through a divorce.¹¹ For the minister, unlike the non-clergy, divorce can result in the church requiring a pastor to resign, losing his or her home if a parsonage is provided, the denomination withdrawing his or her ordination, and a prohibition of ever holding office again. If the minister serves as an institutional Chaplain, the endorsement can be withdrawn by the denomination and then the minister is processed out of the institution. Ministers can receive a lifetime label bringing shame and reproach regardless of the circumstances for the divorce or whether the minister or the spouse filed for divorce.

Since there are divorced ministers, there is a need to understand how various denominations and other ministers view divorce and its impact on a minister’s ability to fulfill the calling to pastoral service. An awareness of who a divorced minister can turn to for counsel and assistance, as well as knowing who one should not turn to in order to prevent additional pain during an already difficult time is necessary to aid divorced ministers in the spiritual and emotional restoration and healing.¹² Just as Jesus extended

¹⁰ Principles of interpreting whether Paul’s teachings concerning idols (I. Cor. 10:14-22), public worship (chapter 11), and the role of women (I. Timothy 2:9-15) were intended to address specific culture issues of his day or meant as doctrinal guidance for every generation could impact Paul’s teaching regarding divorce.

¹¹ Richard J. Krejcir, “What is Going on with the Pastors in America,” Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development (2007), accessed January 22, 2015. <http://www.truespirituality.org/>.

¹² Some denominations and traditions would not be beneficial to a divorced minister. This

forgiveness and restoration to the woman caught in adultery (John 8), it should be understood which denominations at least offer support, if not restoration to divorced ministers.

This holds true for a minister facing the possibility of divorce or entrenched in severe marital strife. Regardless of one's view on divorce in ministry, the minister in these situations is still in need of counsel and encouragement to prevent entering into a clinical depression or engaging in self-destructive behavior. Even if the act of getting divorced is considered sin, the sinner can be forgiven (1 John 1:9) and should be shown mercy.¹³

The intent of this thesis-project is to understand the various denominational perspectives regarding divorce and the Biblical teachings on divorce, so ministry to those ministers who have endured divorce can begin the healing process.¹⁴ As a result of this research, data can be formulated into a resource for clergy to assist fellow clergy who, either are contemplating divorce, being divorced, or have already gone through a divorce.¹⁵

does not imply their perception is wrong or un-Biblical, but merely they would not be able to provide comfort or encouragement needed by the divorced minister.

¹³ Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 24.

¹⁴ As a supervisory Chaplain, it is required that I provide care for Chaplains who have endured or are currently enduring difficult circumstances such as divorce. An understanding of how different denominations handle divorce is beneficial in my advisory role.

¹⁵ An area discussed less often regarding divorce is the event of the spouse leaving the minister. This raises the issue of how circumstances should be consider in evaluating divorce or should all divorce be treated the same. See Larry Richards, "Divorce and Remarriage under a Variety of Circumstances" in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. by H. Wayne House (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

MINISTRY SETTING

Military Chaplains enter military service as ordained representatives of their denominational body. Chaplains, with a few exceptions, have several years of experience in the local church. Most have served as pastors, others as associate pastors, and some as youth ministers. Upon entering the military, Chaplains understand and accept that they hold a two-pronged position: 1) They are representatives of their denomination, and 2) they must be willing to facilitate the beliefs of others.¹⁶ Chaplains are assigned to specific units or bases and will provide pastoral care for anyone in the unit, regardless of the person's religious beliefs or the lack thereof.

Chaplains exist to ensure all military members and their families have the protection of their First Amendment Right. Simply stated, Chaplains ensure service members have the freedom to practice their religion. The First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."¹⁷

Since service members are often deployed or stationed overseas, Chaplains provide worship services and pastoral care where civilian ministers are not able to go. In the Navy, this is frequently overseas or aboard ships, and the Chaplain may be the only

¹⁶ *Chaplain's Guide To Professional Naval Chaplaincy*.

¹⁷ US Constitution, amend. 1. Accessed 27 February 2015, <http://www.americanusconstitution.com/billofrights.html>.

minister in the area. For this reason, Chaplains are not to force their views on others or attempt to persuade people to embrace the religion of the Chaplain. Service members join the military to provide protection and security for the nation. They are not parishioners to the Chaplain in the sense local members of a congregation are to a Pastor. Nevertheless, service members have the right to practice their religious beliefs.

When Chaplains are stationed together, either aboard large ships or shore commands, they are required to work with Chaplains from other denominations and religions. Chaplains are expected to remain true to their denominational beliefs and traditions without compromising their own beliefs and doctrines. At the same time, they are also expected to respect everyone's beliefs and provide for their pastoral care within the boundaries of their own denominational teachings.¹⁸

In Naval Chaplaincy, the four core capabilities are provide, facilitate, care and advise.¹⁹ The definition of facilitation is to help a person with different beliefs find the appropriate Chaplain. For example, there are various denominational beliefs regarding the sacrament or practice of infant baptism. In the event a service member approaches a Chaplain for infant baptism, if the Chaplain does not practice infant baptism it is not his or her place to convert the seeker. Rather, the Chaplain's role is to find a Chaplain who performs infant baptism and direct the person to that Chaplain. This is known as facilitation without compromising one's beliefs. In like figure, there are various positions regarding divorce. Knowing what various denominations believe and practice regarding

¹⁸ This is frequently called pluralism. Unfortunately it is often viewed as compromising. The truth, however, is pluralism in Navy terms means holding firmly to one's beliefs while allowing others the same courtesy. Failure to maintain one's denominational standards can result in the denomination removing the Chaplain for active duty.

¹⁹ *Chaplain's Guide To Professional Naval Chaplaincy.*

divorce enables one Chaplain to direct the person to another Chaplain for denominational specific guidance or counseling.

To understand how denominations view divorced ministers, this research will survey a specific subset of ministers on their views and their denominational policies. Navy Chaplains are ministers who serve as pastors in the institutional setting of the U. S. Navy. Since members of congregations are influenced by the teachings of their ministers, understanding the theological and doctrinal teachings of the Chaplains' viewpoints is the practical place to begin. Once this data is collected, congregational viewpoints can be explored in a larger survey, as well as research regarding the views of local or civilian pastors. A comparison of the studies would show differences and similarities between how the groups perceive divorce within the laity and within the clergy.

THESIS

From the time of Moses, divorce has been an issue in the Bible. Interestingly, when divorce first appears in the Bible, Moses' guidance is directed at priests rather than the general public. Moses says a priest "must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God" (Lev. 21:7). Moses draws a clear distinction between priest and non-priest. Since that time, divorce has been an issue confronting God's people. Jesus addressed divorce in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 31-32) and was later asked "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason" (Matt. 19:3)? Jesus' answer even appears to surprise his disciples at that time (19:10).

Today, the issue is no less confusing or dividing. Deasley writes, “The Church’s attitude to the divorced must be inclusive and welcoming, not exclusive and discriminatory.”²⁰ However, Laney counters, “If we believe the Bible is totally true, we cannot dodge its claims on our lives in sensitive areas such as divorce.”²¹ Cornes adds to the debate by stating the “gospels seem stubbornly to maintain that divorce is only considered in exceptional circumstances and that remarriage is not an option....”²² As the literature review will show, there is much debate and little agreement on divorce for Christians. Disagreements emerge on the meaning of Scripture, cultural trends, situational ethics, and on the role divorce should or should not play in serving in church offices or positions. When the divorce involves a member of the clergy, the debate rises to a new level of intensity.

For these reasons, it is anticipated this research will support previous findings that four views are commonly accepted in the divorce debate: no divorce and no remarriage; divorce, but no remarriage; divorce and remarriage for adultery and desertion; and divorce and remarriage under a variety of circumstances.²³ Furthermore, it is anticipated that a dual-standard will be present for clergy and non-clergy who are divorced.

What is not known is the degree of influence the variables of Biblical interpretation, personal experience, situational circumstances, and church tradition will

²⁰ Deasley, *Marriage and Divorce*, 183.

²¹ Carl J. Laney, “No Divorce and No Remarriage,” in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 15.

²² Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 34.

²³ Wayne H. House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 9.

guide one's belief. Does one variable carry more weight than others because of personal history with the topic? If faithfulness to Biblical principles means situational circumstances do not matter, then what should happen to the minister who is divorced?

Additionally, it is not known if there is a redemptive process in place to restore a minister's credentials if they are removed from office. Much is said about views on divorce, but little is said about forgiveness and restoration to church offices for non-clergy or continued service of the divorced clergy. Is divorce the modern-day unpardonable sin, carrying no hope of forgiveness? Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ever serving in the church for life?

It is the intent of this thesis to answer these questions from various denominational traditions and teachings. Agreement and harmonious fellowship regarding the conclusions is not intended. However, denominational perspectives can be identified and then compared with historical and Biblical teaching concerning divorce. This comparison will result in knowing what each denomination believes and practices, thereby producing a resource for ministers.

ASSUMPTIONS

This research makes three assumptions regarding denominational views of divorced clergy and non-clergy. The first is based on 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Paul gives specific guidance to Timothy for the qualifications of ministers and deacons, much like Moses did for priests in his day. The assumption can be made that this passage will influence the discussion between treating non-clergy and clergy differently in regards to

divorce. The expectations for ministers are typically accepted as different from that of the average church member. Therefore, there may be less grace and restoration for ministers.

Secondly, the research may find that denominations with a more conservative view of Scripture are less willing to provide restoration to a divorced minister and are less likely to employ a minister who has been divorced. Conversely, denominations with a less literal view may provide greater latitude or more acceptances of divorced ministers. Viewing Scripture as guiding principles versus specific standards of obedience may prove essential in influencing one's view of the divorce question.

Third, the culture of military service may play a role in a more tolerant stance of divorce. This is likely because military chaplains are not always viewed as being the same as local pastors. A local pastor ministers to people of the same denomination and therefore may adhere to denominational traditions more readily than a Chaplain in a pluralistic setting. While a Chaplain from a specific denomination may hold the same doctrinal views as his or her counterpart in the civilian community, there is typically a greater range of acceptance of divergent views and thoughts.

METHODOLOGY

The confusion and uncertainty surrounding a Biblical understanding of divorce and how the church responds, requires explanatory research to seek clarification and identify variables regarding the issue. Surveys are a form of explanatory interview, but limit the participants' response to established questions. "We interview people to find out for them those things we cannot directly observe."²⁴ Interviews facilitate a more open exchange than surveys. Through surveys and interviews, the participants share their perspective, thereby helping to clarify some of the confusion and providing the opportunity to identify which denominations hold to a particular practice. While confusion on Biblical teachings may still exist, identifying markers indicating which denominations hold to various beliefs will remove some of the uncertainty facing a minister seeking assistance, guidance, and ministry following a divorce.

Surveys also provide "a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population."²⁵ The sample of the population (Navy Chaplains) will reveal what their respective denominations teach and practice (trends) and how they, as Chaplains, adapt those practices into the military setting. This study can be compared to other studies where participants, such as civilian clergy, have a different set of parameters from Navy Chaplains, i.e. church members who chose to worship at a particular place and embrace a set belief; pastors who are

²⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 340.

²⁵ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 12.

surrounded by and receive counseling from other same-type denominational pastors, etc.

Additionally, this research can provide one part of a relational study on how military Chaplains and civilian clergy compare of the issue of divorced clergy.²⁶

Variables are “any event, situation, behavior, or individual characteristic that varies.”²⁷ The exclusive use of Navy Chaplains reduces the number of variables involved in the survey. However, consideration must be given to attitudes stemming from personal experience, historical or denominational traditions, and how those attitudes impact the ability or inability to provide restoration after a divorce. To accomplish this objective, the research will use a mixture of three analysis types: Historical, Cross-cultural, and Survey.

The research is historical in the sense it inquires about denominational traditions and historical interpretation. Every denomination had a starting point and has been influenced by social circumstances. For example, in American history, the ratification of the Constitution allowed people to form their own religious views. The result was “...no force other than popular opinion could prevent the formation of new religious organizations, new churches, and even new religions. Anyone who could gather followers could be the founder of a new denomination.”²⁸ The same was true in England, where the Church of England endured change prior to World War I in the form of “a new generation of liberal evangelicals committed to ecumenism and a social application of the

²⁶ Trochim, William M.K. and Donnelly, James P. *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2008), 5.

²⁷ Paul C. Cozby, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009), 66.

²⁸ Frank S. Mead, and Samuel S. Hill, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 11th ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 20.

Gospel.”²⁹ The historical teachings of a denomination and how it may have changed will help to identify possible variables or influences regarding interpretation and application.

Stratification of the population in the research is limited to Navy Chaplains.³⁰ It distinguishes between the cultural differences and influences of institutional ministers in the Navy and local pastors in the civilian community. Denominations holding to the practice of closed communion frequently allow their Chaplains to offer open communion while on deployment or in combat since there may not be another Chaplain in the area to provide such services. Additionally, it is understood that military service is a sacrifice that may prohibit the active involvement in a particular denominational church. This provides a cultural distinction between military Chaplains, who must ensure everyone’s First Amendment Right is protected, and their civilian counterparts, who serve a particular congregation. Therefore, Navy Chaplains are well suited for this introductory study on divorced ministers.

Limited biographical questions to determine denomination, ministerial years of experience, and experience with divorce in the families of participants will be employed. Secondly, specific denominational questions will be used to determine if the participants’ denomination can be categorized into one of the anticipated groups. Thirdly, questions will be asked to compare restoration and continued service between non-clergy and clergy to determine if there are two distinct standards.

The survey will ask questions designed to collect information regarding variables such as beliefs and influences, which may lead to a divergent practice that ministers

²⁹ Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War*, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1996), 8.

³⁰ Creswell, *Research Design*, 148.

might not adhere to before or after military service but that they may observe while in military service. The survey will be in the form of self-administered questionnaire designed to solicit specific information used to formulate the view of participants. This survey is specifically designed for Navy Chaplains on active duty.³¹

The survey is designed not only to collect information on divorce amongst clergy, but will also display differences in how clergy and non-clergy are handled regarding the divorce issue. Additionally, questions will be asked to determine if military service influences participants to deviate from the denominational perspective. A series of questions will be asked requiring a yes/no answer. This will lead to a subset of short answer questions for clarification and reasoning. The last section will conclude with questions requiring a brief explanation on personal views as influenced by their military service.

The goal of this research is for the data to be organized into the four pre-stated categories and denominations holding to those views will be identified and labeled.³² Denominations with restoration processes will be identified as well as those which hold to permanent disqualification. If unanticipated results emerge that do not fit into the pre-stated categories, the data will show there is more variance among Chaplains than their counterparts in perceiving divorce in the clergy ranks.

³¹ Reserve Chaplains are still active in the local church and present a unique focus group for a similar, but different study.

³² House, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 9.

PARAMETERS

The parameters for this study include the exclusive involvement of 15-25 military chaplains currently on active duty. Variables are similar with all military Chaplains, i.e. all have a graduate degree, are ordained, possess pastoral experience, of similar age (within 15 years), physically fit and are exposed to the viewpoints of others without compromising their own. Additionally, military chaplains are accustomed to surveys and discussions regarding diverse religious beliefs. Future research can build on this study by surveying civilian ministers or clergy in other vocational settings.

Even though all participants are on active duty in the Navy and have access to computers at work, only the invitation to participate will be sent to military email accounts. All further correspondence and the completion of the survey will be accomplished using civilian, non-governmental email accounts and computers. This eliminates the need for Department of the Navy approval of the survey.³³

This research seeks to understand what various denominations believe, how divorced ministers are perceived and utilized in ministry settings, and how individual ministers feel toward divorced ministers who still serve in an ordained setting. A further outcome will be an understanding of why denominations and ministers feel the way they

³³ In accordance with the *Navy Chaplain Corps Communications Playbook* (December 2014), on 20 January 2014 I contacted the office of Institute for Organizational Assessment (Navy Survey Program Manager). All surveys conducted on military computers must have Department of the Navy (DON) approval. This requires estimating the number of participants, their salaries, and the time to complete the survey. These estimates are then calculated to determine what the survey will cost the DON in lost manpower. Additionally, the DON must approve the questions and the answers become the property of the DON under the “work-place product” law. The Navy does permit a one-time email invitation.

do, i.e. is it based purely on Biblical interpretation, or are there personal or societal reasons, etc.?

The determination of whether a perspective or viewpoint is right or wrong is not the focus of this research. Books have been published regarding the different views on divorce from a perspective of Biblical interpretation.³⁴ However, information attempting to classify those views by denominational tradition or address whether there is a difference in the manner clergy and non-clergy are handled by those denominations is less abundant.

DESIGN OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The survey (see Appendix A) will consist of three sections and require 10-15 minutes to complete. It uses of a mixture of ten closed-ended and six open-ended questions. The open-ended questions are designed for short answers. As Cozby recommends, the questions are designed to be simple, singular focused, and not leading in a particular direction.³⁵ In addition, the first set of questions is designed to gather background information and avoid any difficult or uncomfortable subjects.³⁶ The second set gathers denominational information or traditions. The third set contains what Patton terms “opinion and value questions” which are “aimed at understanding the cognitive and

³⁴ See for example: Paul E. Engle, *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church: 3 Views*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), and Wayne H. House, *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

³⁵ Cozby, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 125-126.

³⁶ Trochim & Donnelly, *The Research Methods*, 111.

interpretive processes” used by Navy Chaplains that may differ from their civilian counterparts.³⁷

The first two sets of questions are designed for factual answers, providing a basis for identifying which denomination is placed into each of the four categories of beliefs regarding divorce. The third set will require thought and serve to demonstrate the reasoning or rationale behind practices vice traditional beliefs. It is the last set which separates Navy Chaplains as a unique focus group from their civilian counterparts or even the Naval Reserve Chaplains.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Divorce under any circumstance, regardless if the person involved is a clergy or not, is a painful event. What Henlee H. Barnette in 1961 called “One of the knotty problems in the teaching of Jesus,” Ronald J. Nydam described in 2005 as being “heavy on the hearts of many in the church and society.”³⁸ Divorce, whatever it is called, is emotionally painful and spiritually depleting. When the divorced person is a minister, it can make the person question his or her very calling to the divine service of God. The result is a soul that “becomes more like a dump than a garden.”³⁹

³⁷ Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 50.

³⁸ Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1961), 113; Ronald J Nydam, “The Messiness of Marriage and the Knottiness of Divorce: A Call for a Higher Theology and a Tougher Ethic,” *Calvin Theological Journal*, 40 (2005): 211, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcpi/fulltext/ctj/122783.pdf>.

³⁹ Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1985), 157.

This thesis-project intends to provide a resource to find help, counseling, and possibly restoration for those who have endured the agony of divorce, regardless of the reason for the divorce. It aims to explore theological teaching and literature, coupled with the insight and denominational teachings of Navy Chaplains. As the mission of Naval Chaplaincy is “to enrich their lives by meeting their religious and pastoral care needs, inspiring hope, strengthening their spiritual well-being, and increasing their resilience and readiness,” so is the intent of this thesis-project.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kibben, “The Chief of Navy Chaplains FY 2015 Annual Guidance.”

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Biblical theology approaches the teachings of Scripture from the systematic viewpoint of historical development. “It concentrates on the emphasis of a given period of history as the Old Testament or on the explicit teachings of a particular writer as in the New Testament.”¹ Jesus demonstrated this by saying he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). Biblical theology begins by looking at the law in context of what was happening at the time, and then moving through each period of Scripture to arrive at the historical circumstances of Jesus’ teachings.

“Some of the major passages [regarding divorce] are Genesis 2:24, Leviticus 18:6-18, Deuteronomy 24:1-3, Matthew 5:32, Matthew 19:3-12- especially verse 9- Mark 10:2-12, and 1 Corinthians 7:12-16.”² Rather than examine each passage in isolation as a proof text, this chapter will examine Scriptural teachings and examples concerning divorce by dividing the Old and New Testaments into sections fitting the Biblical theology approach. The Old Testament is divided into the law, history, poetry, and the prophets. The New Testament is sectioned into the Gospels, history, Pauline teachings, the General Epistles, and Prophecy.

Then through studying passages, word usage, teachings derived from the Biblical context, and showing the historical changes in marriage and divorce, the Biblical theology of divorce will develop. The major passages referenced above can then be

¹ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 20.

² H. Wayne House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1990), 10.

placed in their historical context of social developments and understood from the point of view from the original recipients and discussed in the literature review chapter.

It should be noted that the changes and social trends recorded in the Bible regarding divorce do not always indicate what God ordained, approved of, or desired for His people. They are, however, statements of facts. An example is the account of Solomon's many wives (1 Kings 11:3). Scripture records it as fact and describes their impact on Solomon, but never endorses his actions as directed by or intended by God. In like manner David's marriage to Bathsheba involved murder and adultery that God punished him for (2 Samuel 11-12). However, God used that relationship to produce Solomon.

Of the thirty-four times divorce is recorded in the Bible, ten times are descriptions used to describe a person who was divorced in the past or as statement of fact, two are used in reference to God and Israel, eighteen are teachings regarding the act of divorce and four times the word is used in repetition within the Gospel accounts (Matthew 5:31 and Luke 16:8).³

³ Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 1990), 299.

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Hebrew Terms for Divorce

There are three Hebrew words used for divorce. The first mention in Scripture regarding divorce is Leviticus 21:7. The word used is “divorced” and “denotes an effective separation between persons or groups, expulsion.”⁴ The same word reoccurs in verse 14 of that passage and in Leviticus 22:13, Numbers 30:9, and Ezra 44:22. In each usage the reference is to a woman who has been divorced in the past.

שָׁלַח is used in Deuteronomy 22:19 and verse 29. It is used again in 1 Chronicles 8:8, Jeremiah 3:1, and Malachi 2:16. The verb *šālah* means to send away. “The meaning *send away* is generally found in the Piel and is seen in Gen 12:20; 18:16. Genesis 3:23 clearly involves an expulsion, and in Jer. 28:16 the meaning involves death. Divorce is a sending away of the wife (Deut. 22:19, 29; Isa. 50:1).”⁵ It is the formal termination of a marriage.

The third Hebrew word is קְרִיתָה and serves as a legal term convened in the writing of a divorce document. It is used in Deuteronomy 24:1, 3, 4; Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:8. The most important use of the root is “to cut” a covenant *bērît* (q.v.).⁶ In each use the reference is the certificate or bill of divorce.

⁴ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 173.

⁵ Harris, Archer Jr., and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 928.

⁶ Harris, Archer Jr., and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 457.

Marriage in Genesis

The divine intent for a relationship between man and woman is revealed in Genesis 2:24, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”⁷ This plan was established before anyone was called mother or father, thus reflecting this to be God’s future plan and not just for Adam and Eve. They were to fulfill Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it....” Even after their sin and banishment from the Garden of Eden, which had been the perfect place created by God, the relationship was meant to remain intact. In Genesis 3 God pronounces their punishment. They were to endure the hardships of life outside the garden by laboring together and bearing children. This centered on their relationship together.

By the next chapter of Genesis, within the first seven generations of mankind, a change had emerged in the marital system. “Lamech married two women....” (Genesis 4:19). There is no comment or explanation in Scripture elaborating on this change. It is stated as a simple factual comment. As Ross observes, this “section begins here with the dual purpose of linking the record of Adam and his generation to the story of Noah, and of showing the result of sin in the human race.”⁸ Therefore, no effort is made to describe why or precisely when this change began.

What is revealed is the struggle felt by people and the desire for relief. When Noah is born, Lamech says of his son “He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of

⁷ Genesis 2:24 is quoted by Jesus (Matthew 19:5) and by Paul (Ephesians 5:31). It is the foundational principle for marriage given by God. Sin complicated the relationship, but did not nullify it. Jesus and Paul still used it as God’s intent.

⁸ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 171.

our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed” (Genesis 5:29). Chapter 6 describes the wickedness and God’s disappointment with man. Whether or not the change in marriage was part of that wickedness is not stated.

Following the flood, Abram’s wife Sarai told him to have children through her maidservant (Genesis 16:1-2). This is the first mention of a surrogate practice in marriage. Abraham used his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac (16:4). This is the first mention of arranging a marriage. In Genesis 29 the second mention of marriage to two women is described. Additionally, Jacob’s two wives give him their maidservants to bear children. Scripture states the Lord “opened her womb” in connection with his two wives (29:31; 30:22). The inference can be drawn that God blessed both of Jacob’s wives. This marital and childbearing arrangement was not God’s original intent. Yet this is the formation of the nation of Israel and the reinstatement of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 35:11-15).

Marriage and Divorce under Mosaic Law

Following the exodus from Egypt, God gave the Israelites his law to live by. Marriage for Hebrew servants is the first discussion regarding marriage for the new nation. If the owner of a servant provides a wife for his servant, the wife remains the property of the owner if the male servant is released after seven years of service (Exodus 21:4). Verse 10 says “If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing, and marital rights.”

God's requirement for his people and his priests is a life of holiness (Leviticus 20:7). The first mention of divorce in Scripture is spoken in connection with the holiness of a priest. "They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God" (Leviticus 21:7). This is the first negative connotation of divorce. It appears to condemn divorce as a form of defilement. However, verse 13 says the woman chosen as a wife for a priest "must be a virgin. He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people." Therefore, the defilement is descriptive of prostitutes, not divorced women. Otherwise, widows would also have to be described as defiled.

Deuteronomy provides the first clear teaching regarding divorce. Authorization is given to take a captive as a wife and then send her away if she does not please her husband (Deuteronomy 21:10-14). **נָלַשׁ** is the word used for sending her away and is one of the Hebrew words used for divorce in other passages. The only prerequisite for sending her away is if the man is "not pleased with her" (verse 14). The next passage begins with "If a man has two wives...." (Deuteronomy 21:15).

The first prohibition against divorce is found in Deuteronomy 22:13-30. If a man slanders his wife and the elders find no proof of the accusation, the man "must not divorce her as long as he lives" (verse 19). The second prohibition is for a man who rapes a woman not pledged to be married. Again, "he can never divorce her as long as he lives" (verse 29). These are the only two occasions given in the law where divorce can never occur.

Deuteronomy provides the first detailed information regarding divorce and remarriage. "Divorce was widespread in the ancient Near East.... The commands in

Deuteronomy 24:1–4, then, were given to regulate an already existing practice.”⁹ If a woman is given a certificate of divorce by her first husband and then remarries and receives another certificate of divorce, she cannot remarry her first husband (24:1-4). There is no comment on the divorced one getting remarried, other than it cannot be to the first husband. “The legislation here neither commands nor condones divorce in general but only regulates its practice for ancient Israel.”¹⁰

Marriage and Divorce in Old Testament History

Old Testament history is largely characterized by disobedience to the Law. After the deaths of Moses and Joshua “the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord” (Judges 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1). Their disobedience is best characterized in the statement “After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). “The cycle of apostasy, judgment, cry for deliverance, and God’s raising up of a judge reflects a deuteronomistic perspective with its warnings concerning disobedience and judgment.”¹¹

This attitude impacted the marital relationship through the children of prostitutes having a role in shaping history (Judges 11:1), fathers giving their daughters to foreign

⁹ Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 305.

¹⁰ Eugene H. Merrill, “Deuteronomy,” in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 316.

¹¹ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 758.

men (12: 8-9), leaders marrying foreign wives (14:1-4), the use of concubines amongst Levites (chapter 19), and the practice of taking wives by force (21:20-21). Even though God used these events to direct the course of Israel's history (Judges 14:4), the people were far from the holiness they should have been seeking.

The two books of Samuel demonstrate that righteous men may have more than one wife, as in the case of Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:2-3), that marriage was used as a reward for good service to the monarch (1 Samuel 17:25; 18:17), and wives could be taken away as punishment (25:44). David had six wives (2 Samuel 3:2-5) and then he "took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem" (5:13), even though this violated the Law (Deuteronomy 17:17).

Despite David's multiple wives and concubines, God said to David "I have been with you wherever you have gone...now I will make your name great, like the greatest men of the earth" (2 Samuel 7:9). Later David is told God will establish David's kingdom (verse 12). In chapter 8 David is described as "doing what was just and right for all his people" (verse 15). Following David's sin regarding the murder of Uriah and adultery with Bathsheba, God rebukes David and says, "I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more" (12:8).

The picture of how marriage was used to satisfy a man's desires is drawn through the apparent accepted practices of Old Testament culture. David's son, Amnon falls in love with his stepsister, Tamar (2 Samuel 13). To avoid being raped, she suggests "Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you" (13:13). This is stated like it was common practice.

Historical alliances were frequently made or sealed by marriage to a king's daughter as illustrated by Solomon marrying Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 3:1) despite the prohibition of marrying foreign wives. Solomon also married "many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter...they were from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, you must not intermarry with them...." (11:1-2). The total number of women Solomon had some form of relationship with was "seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines" (verse 3). It appears from the text and the lack of condemnation of David having multiple wives that it was the marriage to "foreign wives" that is condemned instead of the multiple marriages. These changes occurred 480 years after the exodus (6:1).

The kingly example was followed by the nation of Israel. Ezra had to confront this upon return from captivity (Ezra 9:1-3). Ezra's solution was to send the foreign wives away (10:1-3; 11) and to make a list of all the men who had foreign wives (10:18-44). The men were to נסח or send away their wives and children in order to purify themselves. This event was reiterated by Nehemiah's account (Nehemiah 9:2). Nehemiah reminds the people in 13:26 of past failures and asked "was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned?" However, he does not mention sending the wives away but established a future policy of not marrying foreign women (13:25).

Following the rebuke from Ezra and Nehemiah, the book of Esther contains a different prospective. After King Xerxes banished his wife, he sought a replacement (Esther 1:19). Esther, a Jew, became his wife. This marriage to a foreign king is a violation of the Mosaic Law. But it is Esther who saved the Jewish people from being

massacred. Her uncle told her “...and who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this” (4:14).

Historical Summary

In Israel’s history there are changes in the original intent God described in the Garden of Eden. The condemnation falls on marrying foreign wives and the practice of divorce is condemned only if the husband falsely slanders his wife (Deuteronomy 22:19) and if a man wants to divorce the woman he raped (22:29). Throughout the history of Israel marriage and divorce are common practices that are more regulated by Scripture than forbidden. Through the historical development of marriage, women are treated as a product involved in business transactions, used to form alliances, awarded as a gift, as property, and as a conquest in war times. Divorce is treated as a common event. “Marriage in the ancient Near East was contractual, involving payments, agreed stipulations, and penalties. If either partner broke the stipulations of the contract, the innocent partner could opt for a divorce and keep the dowry.”¹² These outside influences can be seen in the Biblical history of God’s people.

Marriage and Divorce in Wisdom Literature

The law and historical sections of the Old Testament view marriage as a means of reproduction, sexual satisfaction, and as a means to fulfill God’s intent of not being

¹² David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, IL: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 1.

alone. Focus is on holiness in relationship to God and on national purity. This focus changes in the wisdom writings to individual responsibility. “Wisdom literature took the lowest common denominator of the social order, the individual, and addressed the matter of how he could contribute to social stability.... [It] called upon man to live up to his potential.”¹³

The psalmist views the home as a blessing from God that he must build (Psalm 127:1), children are a reward (127:3), and the prayer is to “live to see your children’s children” (128:6). This focus on home life is carried into Proverbs where mother and father are viewed as teachers to their children (Proverbs 1:8) and God “blesses the home of the righteous” (3:33).

For the first time a wife is not viewed as property or possession but is seen as someone to rejoice in throughout life (Proverbs 5:18-19) and is described as “a husband’s crown” (11:4). A wife is viewed as receiving favor from God (18:22). Proverbs 31:10-31 is the longest passage in Scripture where a “wife of noble character” is described and admired. In this passage she is viewed as the true helpmate God created for Adam and is seen as a contributing partner to the marriage instead of property. “One noteworthy thing about the woman in proverbs is the leadership she exhibits in her home.”¹⁴

The wisdom literature frequently takes a humorous view on life. On one hand a wife is viewed as sometimes difficult to live with (Proverbs 21:9, 19) and at times, can become a snare (Ecclesiastes 7:26) that is viewed as less upright than a man (7:28). On

¹³ C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), 55.

¹⁴ Robert L. Alden, *Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1983), 219.

the other hand, the ultimate goal is to “enjoy life with your wife, whom you love” (9:9).

This concept of enjoyment is given a vivid description in Song of Songs.

While the Biblical theology of the wisdom literature still carries hints of a law and historical perception of a wife, there is a noticeable change to how women are viewed as having a significant role in the marriage and home. Divorce and separation are not mentioned in wisdom literature and the passages addressing wives and family only include descriptions of monogamous relationships. This is a contrast to the practices and culture presented in the Old Testament law and historical accounts.

Divorce in the Prophets

Old Testament prophets “were the divinely appointed moral and ethical preachers and teachers of true religion to Israel.”¹⁵ The tone of their message is frequently harsh and direct. Their intent was to call the nation of Israel back to the true worship of God and to educate the people about the pending divine punishment if they failed to respond. Most of the prophetic teachings were directed at the nation as a whole and not the individual. The prophets frequently reference the nation of Israel as God’s wife (Jeremiah 3:6-10; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1:2-5). This leads to the imagery of God divorcing Israel (Isaiah 50:1). There is a summons for the people as a nation to return to their husband, which is God (Jeremiah 3:14) after having broken the marriage covenant with him (11:10).

¹⁵ Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), 48.

Jeremiah uses the Mosaic Law in reference to Israel returning to God by saying “If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers” (3:1). Ezekiel uses the priestly requirements of not marrying widows or divorced women (Ezekiel 44:22-23) in preparation of the new temple (Chapter 40). Neither writer directly addresses the issue of divorce apart from metaphoric references.

It is not until Malachi that divorce is discussed in a literal sense in the prophetic writings. “Malachi 2:10-16 discusses Israel disloyalty to the national family (v.10), spiritual family (vv. 11-12), and marriage partners (vv. 13-16), evidenced by spiritual harlotry, mixed marriages with unbelieving partners, adultery and, finally, divorce.”¹⁶ Men from Judah were marrying “the daughter[s] of a foreign god” (2:11) and this led to corruption as it had in the past. God says he will no longer accept their offerings because to marry the daughters of foreign gods they have broken faith with the wives of their youth (verses 13-14). God says he designed marriage “because he was seeking godly offspring” (verse 15). This leads to the most direct statement in the prophetic writings: “I hate divorce” (verse 16). It will not be until the Sermon on the Mount that divorce is addressed again in Scripture.

¹⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 250-251.

Summary of Old Testament Teachings

God's plan was for marriage to be forever. But marriage went through historic changes in practice with having more than one wife, the issuing of a certificate of divorce, many wives by kings, wives treated as property, marriages formed with foreign wives, and wives being cherished and honored. By the time of the rebuilding of the temple, foreign wives were sent away and Solomon's wives were cited as his downfall.

Some of these actions are directly condemned, others the condemnation is implied. It appears in the case of David having multiple wives, there is no condemnation. Reasons for divorce are given in the law and at times the divorce or sending away of a spouse is divinely directed. In spite of all the modifications through history, God makes it clear that He "hates divorce."

INTERBIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS

"The intertestamental era has been called a period unrivalled for religious wavering and confusion."¹⁷ After Malachi, there is silence in Scripture for more than 400 years. This time gave rise to "many significant political and religious developments" that influenced the Jewish people prior to John the Baptist's appearance.¹⁸ Conquering powers

¹⁷ Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 42-43.

¹⁸ Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 1.

included the Persians (538 to 332 B.C.), Greeks (332 to 167 B.C.), Maccabean Dynasty of Hebrew independence (167 B.C. to 63 B.C.), and finally the Roman Empire (63 B.C. to A.D. 70).¹⁹

The lack of religious leadership, such as the judges and prophets had been, resulted in the rise in power and influence of the Sanhedrin, formed by the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees. “The likely origin of the Sanhedrin is to be found in the postexilic period, when those who reorganized Israel without a king made the ancient ruling families the basis of authority.”²⁰ As the intertestamental period drew to a close, the Sanhedrin had control over the Jewish population for religious purposes. This body formed the greatest opposition to John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and other significant people during the formation of Christianity.

The myriad influences during this time impacted every area of life. Economics, language, travel, religion, socialization, and morality were shaped based on the cultures of the prominent power or influence of the day. “The prevailing tendency in the society of that day was an embracing of immorality, indulgence, and lawlessness. Murder, suicide, and infanticide were very common.”²¹ Amidst this environment Judaism struggled to maintain the teachings passed down from the Mosaic Law.

¹⁹ See William W. Stevens, *A Guide for New Testament Survey* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1977).

²⁰ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1165.

²¹ Stevens, *A Guide for New Testament Survey*, 43.

Two prominent Rabbis, Hillel and Shammai “presided over the two most important rabbinic schools of their time.”²² Their influence would help direct the course of Judaism and influence the Sanhedrin. Hillel appears to have had the strongest influence and it merged, to some degree, with the reigning political power of the Greeks and then Romans. During this time “divorce, being easily obtained, multiplied rapidly, thus laying the foundation for the eventual decay of family life.”²³

The low moral standard impacted the practice of Judaism in teaching and in application. “According to Jewish tradition, adultery was not only sufficient grounds for divorce but something that necessitated it. It was considered improper to remain with a wife who has been defiled by another man” by Greek or Roman standards.²⁴ The failure to have children within ten years had become grounds for divorce.²⁵ Additionally, the Greeks and Romans still engaged in the practice of using concubines.²⁶ Just as their ancestors had done during Babylonian captivity, intermarriage and influences of idol worship crept into the Jewish culture.

It is this culture of low morality, easy divorces, lack of devotion to the Mosaic Law, and civil uncertainty that the New Testament opens up to and the church is born. These conditions were commonly understood and this lifestyle was the standard for large

²² Chad Brand, Charles Draper, ed., “Hillel,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 765.

²³ Stevens, *A Guide for New Testament Survey*, 43.

²⁴ David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: a Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 68–69.

²⁵ David Instone- Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 92.

²⁶ J. A. Thompson, “Concubine,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 219.

portions of the population. This morally-deficit climate is what John the Baptist encountered and led him to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 3:2). Understanding the culture of the time may shed light on the teachings of the New Testament regarding divorce.

NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Greek Terms for Divorce

The Greek New Testament uses four words in connection with divorce.²⁷ In the Gospels, Jesus uses ἀπολύω, meaning to set free, loose or remove and is translated as divorce. Paul uses λύσις, meaning to let loose or separate, once in 1 Corinthians 7:27 when he says “do not seek a divorce.” Both words come from the root λυω meaning to untie, loose or release. When speaking of a certificate of divorce, Jesus uses ἀποστάσιον in the Gospels. Paul uses ἀφίημι, from the root ιημι, to say a husband must “not divorce” his wife. The root literally means to let loose, to forgive or to permit as in the case of dismissing or releasing someone from one’s presence.

Regarding the terms used for divorce, Louw and Nida write:

The expressions for divorce are often based on terms meaning literally ‘to send away,’ ‘to separate from,’ or ‘to leave one another.’ However, in a number of languages idiomatic expressions are employed, for example ‘to send him off with

²⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 156.

his clothes,’ ‘to untie the knot between them,’ or ‘to throw away her hearthstones.’

Some persons have attempted to make an important distinction between ἀφίημι in 1 Cor. 7:11, 13 and χωρίζω in 1 Cor. 7:15 on the assumption that ἀφίημι implies legal divorce, while χωρίζω only relates to separation. Such a distinction, however, seems to be quite artificial.²⁸

For purposes of this discussion, no attempt is made to distinguish between legal divorce and separation. The concepts of sending away and releasing are understood to mean divorce in the sense of ending the marriage as used in the New Testament. Though Jesus uses different words than Paul, the meaning is understood to be the same.

Marriage and Divorce in the Gospels

Matthew’s account of the birth of Christ is the first New Testament mention of divorce. When Joseph learned Mary was pregnant he “had in mind to divorce her” (Matthew 1:19). The Greek word ἀπολύω is used to indicate he wanted to set her free or release her. The intervention of an angel stopped him (1:20).

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus begins his speech by focusing on the kingdom of heaven (5:3) and informing his audience that they are “the salt of the earth” (5:13) and a “light to the world” (5:14). “Jesus’ sermon therefore must be understood in the context of His offer of the kingdom to Israel and the need for repentance to enter that kingdom.”²⁹ He says he did not “come to abolish the Law or the Prophets...but to fulfill them” (5:17).

²⁸ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 456.

His focus was on how people should model a godly life, how they should pursue true righteousness in their hearts. “The religious leaders had an artificial, external righteousness based on Law. But the righteousness Jesus described is a true and vital righteousness that begins internally, in the heart.”³⁰ Jesus addresses six specific topics and shows their relationship to the law and how they should be fulfilled beginning in the heart of the listener (5:17-7:27).

Jesus’ first teaching on divorce (5:31-32) states divorce is acceptable only if there is marital unfaithfulness. “The practice of divorce was an ancient and traditional custom, which Moses limited by insisting on a definite motive, and on a regular bill of divorce.”³¹ His teaching on divorce is part of six subjects covered in Matthew chapter 5. Of the six, only divorce is measurable in the sense that it is documented. Anger, lust, swearing, resistance, and love for enemies are interpretable actions. Divorce is legally provable by the certificate of divorce, whereas proving someone lusted and is angry remains open to opinion.

When asked directly about divorce, Jesus responded to the Pharisees that God’s original intent was for marriage to be a lifetime commitment (Matthew 19:4-6). Here Jesus returned to Genesis 2:24 and quoted God’s original intent.³² The Pharisees then

²⁹ Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., “Matthew,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, Vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 28.

³⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 21.

³¹ John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 115.

³² See footnote #7.

asked why Moses allowed divorce if it was not God's intent (verse 7). Rather than verse 7 being an attempt by the Pharisees to misquote Moses by saying he commanded the issuing of a certificate of divorce, the use of "command" could be a reference to Moses' guidance that to end a marriage required formal legal action rather than merely sending one's wife away. Moses did not command people to get a divorce. He did, however, command that a certificate of divorce be issued (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). The certificate of divorce allowed the divorced woman to remarry and have provisions made for her by the new husband. Without the certificate, she would have been homeless and without means.

Jesus informed them "because your hearts were hard" Moses had permitted it (Matthew 19:8). His response reflects his earlier teaching that true righteousness comes from the heart and not just adherence to the law. Not only was his teaching surprising to the Pharisees, but even his own disciples appeared stunned (verse 10). Jesus reiterated that marriage is not meant for everyone (verses 11-12). This passage is also recorded in Mark 10:1-12 with no significant change in the account.

Some of Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount are recorded in Luke's account (Luke 6:17-49) but divorce is not mentioned. However, in Luke 16 Jesus responds to the Pharisees' disgruntlement (verse 14) and their attempts at self-justification by reminding them God knows their hearts (verse 15). The only verse in Luke on the topic of divorce (verse 18) does not include an exception for marital unfaithfulness.

The purpose of Jesus' teachings is not a restatement of the Law, but to lead people to focus on righteousness coming from the heart. "Our righteousness, then—if it is to contrast with the outward and formal righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—must be

inward, vital, and spiritual.³³ With the exception of Joseph considering divorcing Mary (Matthew 1:19), there are only three times the Gospels mention divorce. The first was in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus was addressing six main topics (Matthew 5:32-32). The second was in response to a question by the Pharisees and comment by his disciples (Matthew 19:3-12; repeated in Mark 10:1-12). The third statement was in criticism of the Pharisees' attempt at justifying themselves without examining their hearts (Luke 16:18).

Marriage and Divorce in Paul's Writings

Paul provides the most material on marriage and divorce given in the New Testament. Some of his teaching deals directly with the topic, while other sections either allude to or imply guidance. Central to his teaching is living by faith in Christ as opposed to observing the law (Galatians 2:16).

His first use of marriage and divorce is in an illustration of the Christian's freedom from the Old Testament law (Romans 7:1-3). Just as a person is free to remarry after the death of the spouse, Christian's who have "died to the law through the body of Christ" are free from the law (verse 4). Frequently in his writings Paul uses the metaphor of marriage for the relationship of Jesus to the church.

The first letter to the church at Corinth contains his longest discussion regarding marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-40). The church had asked a question about marriage (7:1). He responds, "It is good for a man not to marry" (verse 1). His focus is on resolving some

³³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 21.

of the moral disorder described in chapters 5 and 6. According to Paul, marriage is one solution to some of the immorality (verse 2). When a husband and wife “fulfill [their] marital duty” it helps to avoid temptation (verse 3-5).

Paul encourages people not to divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). But if they do divorce they should remain unmarried unless they remarry their former spouse. “The difference in language between separate...on the part of the wife and divorce on the part of the husband was probably due to stylistic variation as the word translated *separate* was commonly used in the vernacular as a term for divorce.”³⁴ The word here for separate is the same used by Jesus in Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9.

Paul offers an exception to this rule. In the case of an unbelieving spouse, if the unbeliever wishes to leave, then the believing spouse is not bound or literally, “enslaved” to the marriage because “God has called us to live in peace” (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Because people were being converted to Christianity after they had married, spouses who were faithful to serving various other gods were likely unwilling to remain married to a Christian. “The believing husband or wife is not at liberty to separate, unless the disbeliever or pagan insists on it. Willful desertion of the unbeliever sets the other free, a case not contemplated in Christ’s words in Matt. 5:32; 19:9.”³⁵ This situation resembles what Ezra faced in sending away the spouses who were foreign and worshipped other gods (Ezra 10).

³⁴ David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 518.

³⁵ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 1 Co 7:15.

At the time of Paul's writing, this part of the world was changing rapidly. There was competition between Judaism and Christianity, Christianity and Rome, and general changes in the social order. Paul has to contend with the social issues of circumcision and slavery as well. In addition, Christians were being persecuted, causing many to feel the end was near (1 Corinthians 7:29-30).³⁶ Since circumcision was a mark of Judaism that could not be undone, and since some Christians were slaves, he urged them to be content (verse 17-24). His intent was to demonstrate that Christ accepted them regardless of their state and they could be faithful Christians "in the situation God called them."

Having said, "Do not deprive each other" in the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:5), he changes direction and says, "...the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none" (verse 29). At first glance it appears Paul is contradicting himself. But he understood that marriage could create a distraction from serving God (verses 28, 33-35) in spite of having previously said that marriage helped to avoid immorality (7:2, 5, 36). Paul's emphasis is on serving God in a rapidly changing world where his listeners were coming from a variety of walks of life. He concludes this section by re-emphasizing that marriage should be for life (verse 39).

Paul's next discussion on marriage occurs in Ephesians 5:22-33. He does not address divorce, but the passage provides insight into how Paul viewed marriage and why he had discouraged divorce in earlier writings. Marriage was no longer viewed as a man having multiple wives and concubines. Rather, it is viewed as a man and woman loving and serving each other in mutual edification just as Christ loves the church (Ephesians

³⁶ 1 Corinthians was written close to the time James and 1 Peter were written. Both of the latter books directly addressed the persecution being faced.

5:22-28). Paul uses the imagery of marriage between husband and wife as reflecting Christ and the church.

From this point forward, Paul's only remaining references to marriage are the qualifications of church offices. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, Paul outlines the criteria for pastors. In the section in Titus, Paul switches terms from elder to overseer (compare verse 6 with verse 7) but “it means the same office as elder in 1:5” and refers to the office of pastor.³⁷

There are multiple characteristics of the pastor in 1 Timothy and in Titus, and while not in the same order, are repetitious in nature.³⁸ Similar to the list of topics Jesus covered in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), only “the husband of one wife” is truly measurable. Whether a person is self-controlled, able to teach, manages his family well, etc., is open to judgment and the opinions of others.

Most translations render verse 2 as “...the husband of one wife.” However, the New Revised Standard Version translates it as “married only once.” But Timothy and Titus use similar Greek wording for the phrase. Whether it is one wife or one marriage, the guidance seems to preclude a man who has been married twice.

The difficulty with this passage is Paul is writing at a time when polygamy was still possible, divorce was common, and the first generation of Christians are still living

³⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Tt 1:7. See also Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 659; A. Duane Litfin, “Titus,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 762.

³⁸ Depending on the division one uses, there are either 14 or 15 characteristics listed in 1 Timothy 3.

after converting from Judaism and other religions.³⁹ If taken to mean a divorced man cannot be a pastor, than it also would include men who are not currently married (never married and widows) and it would exclude women from being pastors as well. Getting more specific, Titus 1:6 adds to Timothy's description in saying "a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient."

Prior to writing the requirements for a pastor, Paul had addressed worship in the church. Men were to lift up holy hands (1 Timothy 2:8), women were to dress in modest attire "not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes" (verse 9), and women were "not to teach" and were to remain silent in the service (verse 12). This may indicate that Paul was addressing cultural concerns prevalent at that time.

Summary to New Testament Teachings

The last two passages in Scripture to deal with marriage are Hebrews 13:4 which states the "marriage should be honored by all," and 1 Peter 3:1-7. In this passage, Peter describes a marriage between one man and one woman in relation to each other. No mention of divorce is made in either passage. It is clear that as the New Testament concludes its teaching on marriage, the Genesis concept of one man and one woman has been restored and the practice that developed in the Old Testament of having multiple

³⁹ The issue of whether Paul was referring to polygamy is debated. Those who argue against Paul referring to polygamy include Deasley, *Marriage and Divorce*, 180-181 and Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 227. Those supporting Paul referring to polygamy include Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 273-274; Keener, ...*And Marries Another*, 87-88, and Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 80-81. Keener also joins Glasscock, *The Husband of One Wife*, in saying Paul could also have been addressing the moral laxity of cohabitation.

wives is no longer valid. Since the New Testament does not directly address polygamy, it can be assumed its role in the early church was eliminated.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Divorce is heavy on the hearts of many in both church and society.”¹ Divorce by itself is a complex and difficult issue to understand. Add to the scenario the divorce of a minister, and the disagreements regarding Biblical teaching create entanglements that lead to separation in churches and add to the depression and anxiety of ministers struggling to know how to approach the subject. As Gary Collins writes, “Sermons and intellectual discussions about divorce often are informative but rarely do they convey the pain that so often accompanies a broken marriage.”²

Many authors begin their discussion on divorce as if the concept is new to the modern era and is limited to the *Western* world. Ministers are frequently accused of “watering down” Biblical teachings and giving into the wishes of people.³ Such assertions only add to the complexity of the issue. In truth, not only did Moses, Jesus, and Paul have to deal with the issue, but the early church fathers, early church councils, and

¹ Ronald J. Ronald, “The Messiness of Marriage and the Knottiness of Divorce: A Call for a Higher Theology and a Tougher Ethic,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 40 (2005): 211-226.

² Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1980), 187.

³ Robert Spaemann, “Divorce and Remarriage,” *First Thing: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life* 245 (August 2014): 17-18. Also see, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *God and Marriage* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1980). Bromiley says, “None of the Gospels offers the kind of blank check for divorce and remarriage which many Christian preachers...offer today...” (45).

leaders in the 1500s like Martin Luther and Erasmus, addressed the issue of divorce at length.⁴

For secular psychologists, divorce is frequently viewed as bad only if the children are young or one spouse is left in a more difficult emotional or financial state.⁵ In fact, some sociologists hold the view “parental divorce increased the well-being of adult offspring, and for some being raised in a second marriage was better than being raised by a single parent.”⁶ Other psychologists hold the exact opposite view that “divorce can be one of the most traumatic experiences a child—as well as an adult—can face.”⁷

Theologians are just as divided as psychologists and sociologists. H. Wayne House uses this diversity of perspectives to edit a book in which he invites four scholars to present their interpretations and then critique the viewpoints of the other contributors. The authors represent each of the four basic positions commonly held today that will be discussed in this literature review. In discussing the complexity of divorce and Biblical principles, House writes, “If experts can’t agree what is the laity to do or think?”⁸ An

⁴ Jane E. Strohl, “Luther’s New View on Marriage, Sexuality and the Family,” *Lutherjahrbuch* 76 (January 2009): 159-192. See also Alex R. G. Deasley, *Marriage and Divorce in the Bible and the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Press, 2000).

⁵ John W. Santrock, *Life-Span Development* (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002).

⁶ James W. Zanden, *Human Development* (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 486.

⁷ H. Norman Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling: What to Do and Say When It Matters Most!* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2011), 356.

⁸ H. Wayne House, *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 9.

examination of history reveals there was also wide disagreement between the early Church fathers on the issue of divorce centuries ago.⁹

Added to the complexity of the divorce issue are situational events involving spousal abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, incest, and other forms of criminal behavior that places the other members of the family in life-threatening situations.¹⁰ These are issues not directly addressed in Scripture and have resulted in sharp disagreements between theologians. Some believe God will eventually work out the problems and change the hearts of the wayward spouse while others believe God has given people common sense and free will to decide for themselves.¹¹ Returning to House's question, "If experts can't agree what is the laity to do or think?"¹²

Chapter two examined what the Bible had to say about divorce. This chapter will examine the literature seeking to interpret and apply what the Bible says concerning divorce. This literature review will revolve around the often-cited four viewpoints. The four categories of beliefs concerning what the Bible teaches about divorce are: 1) No divorce and no remarriage; 2) divorce, but no remarriage; 3) divorce and remarriage for adultery or desertion; and 4) divorce and remarriage under a variety of circumstances. Each view will be examined in light of current literature.

⁹ David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 238-267.

¹⁰ See Alex R. G. Deasley, *Marriage & Divorce in the Bible and the Church*, (Kansas City, KA: Beacon Hill Press, 2000). Also, Kenneth L. Swetland, *Facing Messy Stuff in the Church: Case Studies for Pastors and Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2005).

¹¹ Gary Chapman, *Hope for the Separated: Wounded Marriages Can be Healed* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1982).

¹² House, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 9.

Once the foundation of divorce in general is established, the focus will turn to divorced ministers. This section will review the literature regarding the impact divorce has on the ability to hold church office and whether or not divorce disqualifies a minister from being a pastor. This review will conclude with concepts regarding forgiveness related to divorced people and the church.

VIEWS ON DIVORCE

No divorce- No remarriage

Of the four major views, the literature discussing this view indicates it is the least held by scholars. It allows for no divorce under any circumstance and views all remarriages as committing adultery. Those who hold this view point out “that all the Church fathers but one (Ambrosiaster) agreed that remarriage after divorce, whatever the cause, constitutes adultery.”¹³ This view was also held by “all Greek writers, and all Latin writers” for the first 500 years of the Church age.¹⁴

God’s original design for marriage was for a lifelong covenant relationship between man and woman. Holders of this view cite Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as permitting divorce but not approving it. “In stating the law Moses acknowledges that a bill of divorce was sometimes given, but the law did not institute it or sanction it.”¹⁵ This

¹³ J. Carl Laney, “Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 3 (September 1982): 294.

¹⁴ G. J. Wenham, “Matthew and Divorce: An Old Crux Revisited,” *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 22 (1984): 106.

passage “merely treats [divorce] as a practice already known and existing.”¹⁶ The “intent of the passage is to prohibit the remarriage of a man to his divorced wife in cases of an intervening marriage by the wife.”¹⁷ According to this view the passage does not endorse or command divorce.

J. Carl Laney’s view of Ezra chapters 9-10 is that foreign wives were put away or sent away, but not divorced. “In Ezra 9:1 the word clearly means separation, not divorce.”¹⁸ This was the solution that those who were guilty of marrying foreign women presented to Ezra and received his blessing. The difficulty with this interpretation is the guidance in Deuteronomy 24:1 states a bill of divorcement will be issued prior to sending the spouse away. Laney, however, cautions that this “account is certainly not designed to provide us a biblical pattern for divorce and remarriage.”¹⁹ According to him, this was a unique situation that only Ezra faced.

The no divorce, no remarriage view says, “it is perfectly clear that the Lord did not allow divorce for any use” in referring to Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12.²⁰ “The words ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives’ simply mean

¹⁵ Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Tough Questions* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1991), 43.

¹⁶ J. Carl Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 21.

¹⁷ J. Carl Laney, “Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and the Issue of Divorce,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149, (Jan 1992), 5.

¹⁸ Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 26.

¹⁹ Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 28.

²⁰ Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Tough Questions*, 50.

that God did not give Moses a specific commandment prohibiting divorce.”²¹ Jesus is seen as putting ownership of permitting divorce on Moses’ decision and not as being God’s original intention. In fact, “Jesus taught that divorce was against God’s will, and indeed that the legal ceremony did not secure its goal of allowing both parties to remarry.”²²

The Apostle Paul is viewed as agreeing with Jesus’ teaching. “Paul declares in no uncertain terms that married persons should not seek divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).”²³ Paul discourages divorce, but understands that it does occur. “If an unauthorized separation should occur, Paul offered two alternatives: the wife must remain unmarried permanently, or be reconciled to her husband (I Cor. 7:11).”²⁴ While some may see 1 Corinthians 7:15 as authorizing remarriage if an unbelieving spouse leaves, those holding to no divorce and no remarriage under any circumstances perspective, interpret Paul’s teachings differently. Paul is viewed as “saying that if the unbelieving partner demands separation, then the believer is not ‘under bondage’...to preserve the union through legal maneuvers or by pursuing the unwilling partner all over the Roman Empire.”²⁵

Charles Ryrie describes the distinction between Paul’s teachings and Ezra’s situation. “Jewish law required the unbeliever to be put away (Ezra 9:1-10:44), but the

²¹ Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 33.

²² Wenham, *Matthew and Divorce*, 97.

²³ Laney, *Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7*, 285.

²⁴ Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Tough Questions*, 50.

²⁵ Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 43-44.

Christian should live with the unbelieving partner in order to have a witness in the home.”²⁶ Paul’s question in 1 Corinthians 7:16 is used to justify the distinction between the law and Christian grace: “How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?” “Divorce is forbidden, but dismissal may have to be accepted by the believing partner in a spiritually mixed marriage. And this verse is dealing only with such mixed cases.”²⁷

Those who believe the Bible teaches there is no reason or circumstance for divorce or remarriage attribute Erasmus with the deviation in Jesus’ teaching. In the sixteenth century “Erasmus suggested that the innocent spouse not only had the right to divorce an unfaithful spouse but also to contract a new marriage.”²⁸ Since this time “the majority of Protestant exegetes have understood this verse to allow divorce and remarriage” in cases of adultery.²⁹

Ryrie holds that there is never a scripturally justifiable reason for divorce. “Everything in the New Testament points to a disallowance of divorce.”³⁰ Laney says, “Even in the case of adultery the ‘innocent’ spouse did not have permission to remarry.”³¹ This view holds that the covenant of marriage is so strong there is no obstacle or situation that can warrant breaking the covenant. For those holding this view “God’s

²⁶ Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Tough Questions*, 51.

²⁷ Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Tough Questions*, 51.

²⁸ Laney, *Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7*, 294.

²⁹ Wenham, *Matthew and Divorce*, 95.

³⁰ Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Tough Questions*, 53.

³¹ Laney, *Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7*, 294.

Word must be the foundation of all practical theology. It is on Scripture, not experience, that a biblical theology of divorce and remarriage must be grounded.”³²

Divorce, but No Remarriage

The second category of belief states that divorce may occur, but remarriage is never permitted. Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:3-12, Mark 10:1-2, and Luke 16:18 are cited as foundational for this view. In Matthew’s account, Jesus is interpreted as saying divorce can be granted on the basis of adultery. Mark’s account says it is remarriage after divorce and not the divorce itself that is adultery. Luke 16:18 “places the husband and wife on the same level and condemns the breaking of the marriage bond....”³³

In Matthew’s account of the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees, Jesus has to separate “what is commanded by God from what is allowed by a man (even if that man is Moses)” then he moves “from Deut. 24 to God’s original intention for men and women in Gen.1 and explain[s] the pastoral reason for the allowance Moses made.”³⁴ Jesus gives what has been termed *the exception clause* only in Matthew 19. Early church leaders “regarded the exception clause as authorizing or requiring separation, not permitting

³² Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 16.

³³ Duane Warden, “The Words of Jesus on Divorce,” *Restoration Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1997), 144.

³⁴ Timothy M. S Long, “Mark 10:1-12 and Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in South Africa Today,” *Neotestamentica* 36, no. 1 & 2 (2002): 7.

remarriage afterward.”³⁵ For Jesus “adultery was a violation of the essential oneness of the husband and wife in marriage.”³⁶

“In Mark’s version, the fundamental question posed by the Pharisees is whether divorce is permissible at all.”³⁷ Mark’s account also includes the private discourse between Jesus and his disciples following the encounter with the Pharisees. In this private discussion “there is no exception clause” included.³⁸ Rather Mark’s account does not separate divorce from remarriage. In fact, Jesus said “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her” (Mark 10:11). This is interpreted as meaning “divorce on its own is not equated with adultery, only divorce followed by remarriage.”³⁹

“In Luke the saying of Jesus on divorce is essentially without context.”⁴⁰ C. D. Elledge sees Jesus’ statement as balancing the teaching that remarriage following divorce is adultery for both parties, whether it is the man who divorces his wife or the man who marries the divorced wife. According to proponents of the view that remarriage is not permissible after a divorce, Luke 16:18 says, “Remarriage, in both cases, constitutes the

³⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, “No Remarriage after Divorce,” in *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church: 3 Views*, ed. Paul E. Engle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 23.

³⁶ Warden, *The Words of Jesus on Divorce*, 146.

³⁷ C. D. Elledge, *From the Beginning It Was Not So...Jesus, Divorce, and Remarriage in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 374.

³⁸ Warden, *The Words of Jesus on Divorce*, 145.

³⁹ Wenham, “No Remarriage after Divorce,” 26.

⁴⁰ Warden, *The Words of Jesus on Divorce*, 144.

essence of the transgression.”⁴¹ In fact, Luke 16:18 is used to support their argument that remarriage is never permitted under any circumstance.

Those who oppose the view that Matthew’s exception clause permits remarriage for adultery attempt to use a logical train of reasoning. If adultery is the only grounds for remarriage, that would seem to encourage a spouse desiring a divorce to encourage the other spouse to commit adultery “to secure freedom to remarry instead of to merely separate. But this type of casuistry seems far removed from Jesus’ approach.”⁴² Rather, “the exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 is simply a matter-of-fact recognition that if the wife has already committed adultery, her husband cannot be held guilty of driving her into it by divorcing her.”⁴³ Others view it as applying only to those who are betrothed and not actually married.⁴⁴

Paul is viewed as affirming Jesus’ teaching regarding remarriage after divorce.⁴⁵ However, Paul is seen as having a “somewhat lower view of marriage” that permits divorce more readily than Jesus did.⁴⁶ Jesus permitted divorce for adultery, but Paul adds that if a non-believer leaves a believing spouse, then the believer “is not bound in such circumstances” (1 Corinthians 7:15). But Paul’s “not bound” is viewed as having “the

⁴¹ Elledge, *From the Beginning It Was Not So*, 376.

⁴² Wenham, “No Remarriage after Divorce,” 29.

⁴³ William A. Heth, “Divorce, But No Remarriage,” in *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church: 3 Views*, ed. Paul E. Engle (Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 2006), 93.

⁴⁴ See David W. Jones, “The Betrothal View of Divorce and Remarriage,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165, (January-March 2008), 68-85.

⁴⁵ Elledge, *From the Beginning It Was Not So*, 377.

⁴⁶ Long, *Mark 10:1-12 and Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 9.

same function that the exception clause does in Matthew 19:9: it relieves the innocent party of the guilt of violating Christ's command not to divorce.”⁴⁷

Those holding this view see consistency in Scripture that divorce is sometimes allowed, but remarriage is clearly adultery. Just as Ezra authorized sending away the foreign wives (Ezra 9-10) because the Law was “absolutely prohibitive of mixed marriages,” Jesus allowed divorce in the case of adultery with the exception clause (Matthew 19:9), and Paul permitted divorce if the unbeliever left (1 Corinthians 7:15).⁴⁸ However, remarriage was never sanctioned or permitted. The Bible is seen as in agreement “on the prohibition of remarriage...on the permissibility of divorce and on the grounds of divorce.”⁴⁹ Proponents believe “virtually every one of the modern-day arguments for permitting remarriage after divorce for immorality can be found in Erasmus.”⁵⁰

A literature review of the Biblical perspective that remarriage is not permissible after divorce is clear that remarriage will result in adultery under all circumstance. It is also clear there are no exceptions to the prohibition to remarry following divorce. However, some of the literature also reflects that divorce and remarriage are sins of the past and forgiveness can be obtained after repentance for remarriage. “To refuse the fellowship of the church because one’s past sins include divorce and remarriage appears to be no more reconcilable with a message of grace than to refuse the fellowship of the

⁴⁷ Heth, “Divorce, But No Remarriage,” 112.

⁴⁸ Heth, “Divorce, But No Remarriage,” 89.

⁴⁹ Long, *Mark 10:1-12 and Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 9.

⁵⁰ Heth, “Divorce, But No Remarriage,” 98.

church on the basis of other past sins forgiven by the Lord.”⁵¹ Unfortunately, there are others who believe “it may seem right to exclude from fellowship those whom the Anglican Book of Common Prayer calls ‘open and notorious evil livers’.”⁵²

Divorce and Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion

Unlike the previous two views, this view allows for remarriage if the divorce is based on adultery or desertion of one of the spouses. This view is based on the exception clause of Matthew 19:9 and Paul’s desertion exception in 1 Corinthians 7:15. In addition to the Scriptural basis, some view the change in civil laws as warranting this position.

“The Protestant Reformers claimed that [since] the civil magistrates did not punish adulterers with the death penalty...the adulterer should be treated as if dead.”⁵³

Some theologians who once held a view of remarriage as a prohibitive act have changed their stance to allow remarriage under these limited circumstances of adultery or desertion.⁵⁴ Divorce is still viewed as being sinful or wrong, but this view acknowledges “there may be occasions when divorce is the lesser evil.”⁵⁵ Divorce, under this view, is considered Biblical since “the Bible recognizes and regulates divorce.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ Warden, *The Words of Jesus on Divorce*, 153.

⁵² Wenham, “No Remarriage after Divorce,” 41.

⁵³ William A. Heth, “The Changing Basis for Permitting Remarriage After Divorce for Adultery: The Influence of R. H. Charles,” *Trinity Journal* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 157.

⁵⁴ In 1990 editor H. Wayne House presented four Christian views on marriage. A different theologian authored each view. In 2006 *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church: Three Views* was published using the same format. During the sixteen-year period, author William A. Heth changed his view from *Divorce, But No Remarriage* in House’s book to *Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion*.

Matthew 19:1-12 teaches that adultery or unfaithfulness is grounds for divorce and releases the “innocent party to remarry in exactly the same way any single person can marry.”⁵⁷ The Pharisees had asked Jesus about divorcing “his wife for any and every reason” (Matthew 19:3). In his response, Jesus limited divorce to just adultery, or as the Greek says *porneia*, which means “illicit sex and can refer to illicit sex in general or, in a given context, to some specific immorality.”⁵⁸ The Pharisees had taken an extreme view. “To say divorce is never permitted is the other extreme. By failing to properly interpret the words of Jesus, some have taken his words to form a new legalism.”⁵⁹

This view is supported by the Greek verb usage in Matthew 19:9. “The person who divorces his wife except for fornication is the same individual who marries another since both verbs are in one relative clause describing the one individual.”⁶⁰ There is no reason for Jesus to specifically address remarriage since it was understood in the first century culture that the reason for divorcing, or giving a certificate of divorce, was to

⁵⁵ Heth, “Divorce and Remarriage: The search for an Evangelical Hermeneutic,” *Trinity Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 99.

⁵⁶ Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible: A Fresh Look at What the Bible Teaches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 23.

⁵⁷ Craig S. Keener, ...And Marries Another: *Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 37.

⁵⁸ Thomas R. Edgar, “Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion,” in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 162.

⁵⁹ Ralph Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage: What does the Bible Really Say?* (Palm Springs, CA: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 2002), 23.

⁶⁰ Edgar, *Divorce & Remarriage*, 157.

release the person to be free to remarry.⁶¹ Verse 9 is the only verse in the New Testament “which refers both to grounds for divorce and to remarriage at the same time.”⁶²

Opponents of this view cite the absence of the exception clause in Mark 10:10-12 and Luke 16:18.⁶³ It should be noticed, however, that the question posed to Jesus is also different, just as his response is different. Matthew’s account includes an addition phrase in the Pharisees’ question: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason” (19:3)? In Mark’s account the question is simply “Is it lawful to divorce his wife” (Mark 10:2)? William A. Heth compares the lack of the exception clause to Jesus’ others teachings. “New Testament scholars note that elsewhere in the Gospels (cf., e.g., Matt. 9:15; 19:21; esp. 13:57), we do not try to turn Jesus’ sayings into exceptionless absolutes, so why should we do so in Matthew 19:9 or Mark 10:11-12?”⁶⁴

Ralph Woodrow follows this line of reasoning by providing other examples of exceptions to Biblical statements. He cites Jesus’ response to the Pharisees regarding picking grain on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:4), the exceptions to killing (Exodus 20:13) such as battle, self-defense, killing animals for food and sacrificial offerings, and by direction from God (Exodus 32:27-28). The Old Testament records the killing of “blasphemers,

⁶¹ See William A. Heth, “Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion,” in *Remarriage After Divorce In Today’s Church: 3 Views*, ed. Paul E. Engle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 67-68.

⁶² Craig L. Bloomberg, “Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, and Celibacy: An Exegesis of Matthew 19:3-12,” *Trinity Journal* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 172.

⁶³ Since the Luke passage does not provide a context for Jesus’ statement, it will not be included in this discussion.

⁶⁴ Heth, “Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion,” 73.

disobedient sons, criminals, heretics, and sex perverts. As they conquered new land, they killed people...all this killing was done in obedience....”⁶⁵

Some view Jesus’ words in Matthew 19:9 as being “clear [and] relatively simple, despite the disagreement over its interpretation.”⁶⁶ Heth adds the “intent of Jesus’ teachings on divorce and remarriage is essentially the same” regardless of the absence of the exception clause in Mark and Luke.⁶⁷ While Jesus never commanded divorce, it is clear in his teachings “that remarriage is not forbidden to those divorced with valid grounds.”⁶⁸

The other Biblical exception for divorce and remarriage is Paul’s teachings in 1 Corinthians 7. Paul was faced with one spouse converting to Christianity while the other did not.⁶⁹ People from Corinth had written Paul with questions (7:1). Paul encouraged people to stay married (verse 10) and for the believer not to leave (verse 12-14). However, in verse 15 he says, “If the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or women is not bound in such circumstances....” This provides the second exception in the New Testament to divorce and remarriage. “It is clear that verse 11 describes the norm and that verse 15 represents an exception.”⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 35. See his full discussion on pages 31-35.

⁶⁶ Edgar, *Divorce & Remarriage*, 156.

⁶⁷ Heth, “Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion,” 74.

⁶⁸ Keener, ...*And Marries Another*, 49.

⁶⁹ This type of marriage between Christian and non-Christian is referred to as a mixed marriage in literature.

⁷⁰ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 279.

The Old Testament bill of divorce used the phrase *you are free to marry*, releasing the party to remarry. Paul's expression *is not bound* (I. Corinthians 7:15) "makes precisely the same point."⁷¹ As a result, Paul gives permission for Christians "who are partners in a mixed marriage to be divorced if the non-believer so desires" and "the Christian is therefore not under bondage and is free to remarry."⁷² If the unbeliever leaves, "all bonds of marriage have been removed. He is released entirely from every marriage obligation, and is a totally free person."⁷³

Those holding to the belief that remarriage can occur if divorce was the result of adultery or desertion ascribe to the belief that these are the only two legitimate grounds for divorce. They also see these violations as terminating the marriage contract. "Just as marriage is made by covenantal, contractual agreement, so too is it dissolved by the breaking of that agreement in divorce."⁷⁴

Divorce and Remarriage under a Variety of Circumstances

The fourth and final view of divorce and remarriage expands on the grounds for Biblical divorce and remarriage. Proponents of this view interpret the exception clauses of Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7 in the same basic manner as the previous viewpoint. Therefore, the discussion will be limited to the differences, or expansion of the

⁷¹ Heth, "Remarriage for Adultery or Divorce," 75.

⁷² Keener, ...*And Marries Another*, 65.

⁷³ Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage In the Bible*, 48.

⁷⁴ Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage In the Bible*, 42.

viewpoint, without reciting the grammatical principles of justification, exegetical arguments, and historical reasoning covered previously.

David Instone-Brewer expands the definition of desertion Paul gives to include “any desertion that cannot be reversed.”⁷⁵ Woodrow, citing John Calvin, concurs with this expansion and says, “If divorce is inevitable, who actually files for the divorce or actually departs is really beside the point.”⁷⁶ If one spouse drives the other away by treating the other so bad or in an ungodly manner, then the spouse who left is not necessarily to blame. Just as a spouse wanting to divorce the other on grounds of adultery may encourage the partner to commit adultery, so a spouse desiring divorce on grounds of abandonment can create such an abusive or hostile home that no option is left. Dating back to 1529 Luther recognized this and said, “Every day we see marriages broken by the devil through adultery, unfaithfulness, discord, and all manner of ill.”⁷⁷ Woodrow describes this discord as “an unbelieving attitude...[that] turns the home into a hell.”⁷⁸ From this perspective, a variety of grounds for divorce can be viewed as Biblical.

Luther included “inability to fulfill one’s conjugal duty (impotence or frigidity) so that one’s spouse is deprived of children...and refusal to fulfill one’s conjugal duty or to live with one’s spouse” to the list of justifications for divorce.⁷⁹ Others join Luther and say, “any behavior that is not conducive to a marriage indicates that the person is not

⁷⁵ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 282.

⁷⁶ Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 55.

⁷⁷ Strohl, “Luther on Marriage,” 172.

⁷⁸ Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 56.

⁷⁹ Strohl, “Luther on Marriage,” 176.

willing for the marriage to continue” and failure to change should result in the person being regarding as a nonbeliever.⁸⁰

Craig S. Keener cites abuse, sexual or physical, as well as neglect that endanger the other person’s health as “fundamental assaults on the meaning of the marriage covenant.”⁸¹ Instone-Brewer adds two more exceptions to adultery and desertion, by saying that 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, 32-34 alludes to “emotional neglect and material neglect” stemming from Exodus 21:10-11 “which states that a husband must give a wife food, clothing, and love.”⁸² Larry Richards adds to the list by including mental abuse, repeated adulteries, emotional and spiritual abandonment, or unrepentant and repeated hostility.⁸³

One item missing in literature is a discussion of child abuse based on Matthew 18:5-6. Jesus said to harm a child or to cause “one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large milestone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (verse 6). This appears to indicate it is better to commit suicide than to harm a child or cause the child to sin. One could logically conclude that divorce to protect the child from harm would be an exception according to Biblical reasoning.

The reasoning for these additional exceptions is that “there can come a point when there is nothing substantial left of the marriage relationship” and just as the death of

⁸⁰ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 281.

⁸¹ Craig S. Keener, “Remarriage for Adultery, Desertion, or Abuse,” in *Remarriage After Divorce In Today’s Church: 3 Views*, ed. Paul E. Engle (Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 2006), 112.

⁸² Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 273.

⁸³ Larry Richards, “Divorce & Remarriage Under a Variety of Circumstances,” in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 242.

one spouse can cause separation, “the marriage itself can die.”⁸⁴ At this point in the marriage, “The honest thing may be to accept the need to seek dissolution of the marriage in law, because nothing more remains of it than the legal bond.”⁸⁵

A phrase in 1 Corinthians 7 that is rarely mentioned in discussions on divorce is the expression at the conclusion of verse 15: “God has called us to live in peace.” This is added to Paul’s guidance that a believer is not bound to the marriage if the other leaves. Woodrow says “Such peace was given priority in Paul’s program. If a situation becomes such that only through divorce peace can be obtained, then let it be.”⁸⁶ Adams agrees and says that this phrase is important and “has been overlooked by a number of commentators.”⁸⁷ While the context of this phrase is in reference to desertion, this phrase “would apply in many other similar circumstances.”⁸⁸

Those opposing the view of divorce and remarriage for a variety of circumstances might refer to Laney’s position. As quoted earlier in this paper, he said “Scripture not experience” is the foundation of all decisions and beliefs.⁸⁹ Laney and others would not accept the imagery of an unbelieving attitude or of the marriage dying. They classify this

⁸⁴ Timothy Woods, “Marriage after Divorce: The Challenge for the Church of England,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17, no. 3 (July 2006): 352.

⁸⁵ Michael Owen, “Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical and Theological Perspectives,” *Colloquium* 29, no. 1 (1997): 47.

⁸⁶ Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 56.

⁸⁷ Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 48.

⁸⁸ Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practices* (Great Britain, UK: Mentor, 2012), 299.

⁸⁹ Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 16.

as a view based on experience and not on a Biblical foundation. However, the opponents of allowing divorce and remarriage for a variety of circumstances are frequently the ones who fail to address Paul's statement of living in peace. They also fail to acknowledge issues of abuse, violence, and other life threatening events.

It is worth noting that experience can in fact be the reason for a change on beliefs. This should not be viewed as saying what a person changes views to fit or justify a circumstance. Those who heard Jesus preach may have changed their view based on the experience of Jesus' teachings rather than some hardship. Jesus said, "You heard it said...But I tell you..." as a rhythmic style throughout the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-44). As a result of the experience, his listeners possibly changed their view. The words of Scripture had not changed, but their understanding may have.

DIVORCED MINISTERS

There are four possibilities to interpreting 1 Timothy 3:2 when Paul uses the expression "the husband of one wife." The first is seeing marriage as a prerequisite for pastoral ministry. "According to this view only married men are eligible to serve as elders."⁹⁰ The difficulty with the view is Paul spends a large amount of time discussing how single life is preferable to married life (1 Corinthians 7:8, 20, 26, 28b, 32-34). Marriage as a prerequisite for pastoral ministry would also disqualify Jesus from serving in the pastoral role.

⁹⁰ Ed Glasscock, "The Husband of One Wife Requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July-September 1983): 245.

The second view is Paul meant one wife in a lifetime. This view would preclude a minister from being remarried after divorce, but also would eliminate a widower who remarried.⁹¹ Andrew Cornes holds to the view that widowers who are pastors should never remarry.⁹² However, Adams says that if this was what Paul wanted to establish “there was a perfectly good Greek word that [he] might have used (*gameo*) to indicate that one could never remarry (even after the death of his spouse) and hold office in the church if that is what he had wanted to say.”⁹³ Rather, Paul is referring to a person who “is not given to sexual impropriety toward women. Taken this way, a divorced man and a single man alike could be a ‘one-woman man’.”⁹⁴ Saucy agrees and says it is unlikely this means a single, divorced or widower cannot serve as pastor. It requires “that a man be a loyal husband living in a pure marriage relationship without adulterous relationships or attitudes.”⁹⁵

The third view is Paul was “prohibiting divorced men from being elders or deacons.”⁹⁶ But Alex R. G. Deasley argues against the view that divorce persons are permanently excluded from ministry. He says, “Paul is simply not addressing that issue

⁹¹ Alex R. G. Deasley, *Marriage & Divorce in the Bible and the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2000), 180.

⁹² Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 272-276.

⁹³ Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 80.

⁹⁴ Joe M. Sprinkle, “Old Testament Perspectives on Divorce and Remarriage,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 4 (1997): 548.

⁹⁵ Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972), 146.

⁹⁶ Glasscock, *The Husband of One Wife*, 247.

here.”⁹⁷ Instone-Brewer adds that the act of divorce is not the sin, but the breaking of the marriage vows is, “and the minister may be entirely innocent.”⁹⁸ Many people treat divorce as the unpardonable sin and force godly, devoted people into a form of spiritual exile to be banished from leadership in the church for the remainder of their lives. Ed Glasscock views this as “treating these forgiven children of God as though the blood of Christ could not thoroughly cleanse them.”⁹⁹ Paul is clearly not teaching this since he wrote to the Romans “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24).

The fourth view says Paul is referring to being faithful to one’s wife. Glasscock suggests a more accurate translation of 1 Timothy 3:2 is “a man of one woman” or “a one-woman man” because “this understanding emphasizes the character of the man rather than his marital status.”¹⁰⁰ Heth, Keener, and Rubel Shelly agree that the character of the elder is Paul’s greatest concern and that this view is in context with the other traits Paul outlines in the section.¹⁰¹ Faithfulness to one’s wife also addresses concerns of polygamy that “the Jews continued until the eleventh century.”¹⁰² In Paul’s culture, cohabitation

⁹⁷ Deasley, *Marriage & Divorce in the Bible*, 182.

⁹⁸ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 313.

⁹⁹ Glasscock, *The Husband of One Wife*, 248.

¹⁰⁰ Glasscock, *The Husband of One Wife*, 249.

¹⁰¹ Heth, *Remarriage for Adultery or Divorce*, 80; Keener, ...And Marries Another, 83-103; and Rubel Shelly, *Divorce and Remarriage: A Redemptive Theology* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood, 2012), 156.

¹⁰² Adams, *Marriage and Divorce*, 81.

with several women was frequent and “Paul needed to be very clear that an elder in the church was to be a ‘one-wife man’—loyal to her and her alone.”¹⁰³

The faithfulness view, or “a man of one woman” interpretation, not only fits well with the sections in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, but also is in harmony with the New Testament teaching concerning forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9). It does not disqualify a pastor for past sins, but provides for continued ministry. Additionally, it does not blame the minister in every case of divorce, but allows for redemption and the possibility that the minister may have done nothing wrong or inappropriate to cause the death of the marriage. Woodrow, who holds this view, asks “If God has forgiven people of their past marital mistakes or sins—if he has accepted them—why shouldn’t we?”¹⁰⁴

There is no verse or passage in the Bible that states the sins of the parishioner are forgivable, while the sins of the pastor or elder are not. “Marriage breakup should be treated like any other sin in the past.”¹⁰⁵ The faithfulness view seeks to treat divorce as a sin of the past.

FORGIVENESS

The literature demonstrates four common views regarding divorce and remarriage. It also provides four possible views on interpreting 1 Timothy 3:2. While it is possible that some people will change their view, as Heth has admitted to, there is little

¹⁰³ Glasscock, *The Husband of One Wife*, 252.

¹⁰⁴ Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 74.

¹⁰⁵ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 313.

chance there will ever be agreement on one view.¹⁰⁶ There is however, one issue all the literature does agree on and that is divorce is not the unpardonable or unforgivable sin.¹⁰⁷

Some writers disagree on whether divorce disqualifies a person from church office, but they still believe forgiveness is available for the person. Such is the case with Cornes who holds that divorce and remarriage do disqualify a person from ministry. However, the person still needs forgiveness and support. He views the church as the lead agent in reaching out to those who have been hurt by divorce and even recommends offering an informal ceremony of forgiveness.¹⁰⁸ Instone-Brewer calls this type of ceremony “an informal service of repentance for broken promises” and uses it to “emphasize that all sins are serious and all sins are forgivable.”¹⁰⁹ Even if one views divorce as a disqualifying factor for the pastor, forgiveness, as Cornes states, should be extended and the divorced person treated with grace and not condemnation.

Whether the divorce is biblical or not, “it seems that many of our congregations see divorce as a matter of uncleanness rather than a matter of sin...we lump [both parties] together into a category called ‘unclean’ that we do not wish to touch, lest it contaminate us.”¹¹⁰ Even when the divorce has a biblical basis, it seems to have been “omitted from

¹⁰⁶ Heth’s admission can be read in his response to Wenham’s argument in *Remarriage After Divorce In Today’s Church: 3 Views*, ed. Paul E. Engle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006): 43-44.

¹⁰⁷ Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 359-420.

¹⁰⁹ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church*, 137.

¹¹⁰ Keener, ...*And Marries Another*, 4.

today's accepted list of forgivable sins, even though God forgave them.”¹¹¹ There is no scriptural teaching prohibiting forgiveness for anger, murder, lust, or adultery, which are each mentioned in Matthew 5 along with divorce. On the contrary, to say that every sin but divorce can be forgiven is to say, “in effect, that God has forgiven some people more than others.”¹¹² Instone-Brewer concludes his book with a profound appeal:

The Church should now be humble and admit that a great mistake has been made. Too many generations of husbands and wives have been forced to remain with their abusing or neglectful partners and have not been allowed to divorce even after suffering repeated unfaithfulness. The Church should not continue in a false teaching because Church tradition should not be regarded as superior to the teaching of Jesus and Paul.¹¹³

Some in the church have forbidden divorce regardless of circumstances and, as Keener said, have treated divorced Christians as unclean. In like manner the church has withheld forgiveness from those who have suffered through a divorce. “Why should a person who has suffered failure in marriage be forbidden to pick up the pieces and, with God’s help, make a new start in life?”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 93.

¹¹² Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 90.

¹¹³ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 314.

¹¹⁴ Woodrow, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 41.

SUMMARY

Four views regarding divorce and remarriage and four interpretations of 1 Timothy 3:2 have been presented. My personal view has changed during the course of this research.¹¹⁵ After considering the Biblical evidence and literature that was studied, the view of divorce and remarriage for a variety of circumstances seems to best describe a Biblical position, when all evidence is considered. This does not mean divorce and remarriage are Biblically acceptable in all circumstances. It does, however, mean that divorce and remarriage are not unforgivable sins or marks of uncleanness.

Additionally, the faithfulness view, or “a man of one woman” interpretation seems to be the proper grammatical translation of 1 Timothy 3:2. This view does not exalt the marital status of the minister to the point of being the most important or only disqualifying factor for pastoral ministry. Neither does it cause a minister’s ministry to end because of the actions of the spouse that may victimize the faithful minister.

Collectively, both of these views are in harmony with Biblical teachings of forgiveness and restoration. They provide evidence of God’s mercy and grace to all people. Finally, they allow forgiven people to have a testimony to a hurting world.

¹¹⁵ The reasons for the change will be explained in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4 **PROJECT DESIGN**

In an attempt to understand theological and historical perspectives regarding divorce and the impact divorce has on a pastor's ability to fulfill the calling of ministry, this thesis-project has examined Biblical teachings (chapter 1) and the relevant literature (chapter 2) concerning divorce and remarriage in the church. This chapter focuses on how specific denominations view divorce and whether or not divorce is a disqualifying factor from pastoral ministry. The literature review (Chapter 3) demonstrated there are four views on divorce and remarriage and four views on how to interpret 1 Timothy 3:2. This chapter seeks to identify which denominations traditionally ascribe to each view.

Following data collection, the results were sorted and categorized to determine if the denominations presented in the survey could be classified into the groupings revealed in the literature review.¹ The results of the literature review and the outcomes of the survey were then presented to two groups of Navy Chaplains. The first group consisted of four senior Chaplains with more than 10 years of experience. The second group was four first-tour Chaplains with less than three years of experience. The purpose of the group discussions was to determine if the information would be useful in providing ministry to divorced ministers and to those who are contemplating divorce. The focus groups were not part of the original design. However, due to the numerous comments and discussions generated by the survey, it seemed focus groups would be appropriate.

¹ The individual Chaplains were the source for the information since they are endorsed and a part of the denominations. No source documents were examined to verify the validity of the statements made by the participants.

SURVEY DESIGN

In the military setting Chaplains are endorsed by specific faith groups or denominations. Chaplains are charged with adherence to the teachings and beliefs of their particular denomination. When the Chaplain cannot directly advise a service member on a theological issue, the Chaplain must facilitate finding a Chaplain who shares the theological perspective of the service member.

The literature review revealed four categories of beliefs but did not address which denominations ascribe to those positions. While it is helpful to know the categories of possible positions regarding divorce, to be practical for use in the military setting, identifying which denominations fall into which categories would bridge the gap in the information. This allows the seeker to know where to turn for help and it allows the Chaplain to know where to direct the service member.

“A literature review is designed to identify related research, to set the current research project within a conceptual and theoretical context.”² The categories of beliefs provided by the literature review helped to clarify some of the confusion surrounding the issue of divorce and remarriage by providing a Biblical basis for the various beliefs. The survey sought to clarify the issue from a denomination perspective. Using the explanatory nature of surveys, information that cannot be directly observed can be gathered and compared to the more general information provided in the literature review.³

² William M.K. Trochim and James P. Donnelly, *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, 3rd ed. (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2008), 26.

³ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, 2002), 340.

Parameters

The web-based survey was designed using Google Forms and made use of a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Basic background information was gathered and questions were presented to discover how divorce is treated in general, and how it is treated specifically in the case of pastors. Additionally, individual beliefs were questioned to see if active duty Navy Chaplains held divergent beliefs from their civilian counterparts.

“The external validity of a study is the extent to which the results can be generalized to other populations and settings.”⁴ To ensure external validity, active duty Navy Chaplains were used as a subset of ministers in the survey. The participants in the survey formed a homogenous group based on education, ministry setting, ministerial requirements, and exposure to a diverse population. The participants differ in denominational endorsement.

An initial email was sent to thirty active duty Navy Chaplains inviting them to participate in the survey. To ensure compliance with government policies concerning computer use, the email asked the participants to forward the email to their civilian email accounts and use the embedded computer link to complete the survey. Participants were given the researcher’s private email address to ask questions for clarification or for

⁴ Paul C. Cozby, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009), 86.

comments. Some Chaplains asked to forward the email to colleagues. Ultimately, twenty-three Chaplains responded representing fourteen different denominations.⁵

Participants

All participants are currently on active duty as Navy Chaplains serving in either shore, operational, and overseas tours of duty. Sixteen were married, six have never been married, one is divorced, and one is remarried after being divorced. Participants had an average of 10.3 years of active duty service as Chaplains, with the shortest being one year and the longest being twenty-four. There is no significant difference if outliers are eliminated. Sixteen have divorced members in their immediate families and seven have never had anyone in their immediate family get a divorce.

Since the survey was concerned about theological beliefs and denominational practices, it was decided not to distinguish between male and female participants or between race. Having too many variables can confuse the focus of the research and sway the reader.⁶ “What people ‘see’ is highly dependent on their interests, biases, and backgrounds.”⁷ For this reason, participants were viewed as Navy Chaplains representing

⁵ The email was sent out 9 March 2015. The survey was open for five weeks from 9 March 2015 through 13 April 2015.

⁶ Gary D. Shank, *Qualitative Research: A Personal Skills Approach*, 2nd ed. (Columbus, OH: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall), 2006).

⁷ Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 260.

their individual denominations and not as Chaplains who were male or female and of a specific racial background.⁸

The participants were asked to identify their denomination or faith group. Fourteen different groups were identified. Of the faith groups, two identified as Southern Baptist and one as Baptist. For convenience of data summation, the grouping of *Baptist* was assigned. There were also two people self-identified as Protestant and one person listed Non-denominational as a faith group. For summation purposes, *Non-Denominational* was used. This method reduces the number of denominations to twelve.

There are two anomalies worth noting. First, with regards to the Methodist and Presbyterian participants, it is unknown which specific denominations were meant. No explanation was given by the participants for using generalized terms as opposed to specific affiliations. Second, there were a large number of Seventh Day Adventist respondents. There were two Seventh Day Adventist Chaplains on the original survey distribution list. These two Chaplains requested permission to send it to some colleagues for the purpose of their own discussion.⁹

⁸ The researcher is acquainted with each person and knows there were six females and seven African-Americans who participated.

⁹ The Seventh Day Adventist Chaplains were aware that their Regional leadership held different beliefs that resulted in differences within the denomination. This issue is discussed further in the sections on outcomes and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Table 1. Participants' Faith Groups

African Methodist-Episcopal	2
Baptist	3
Christian Reformed	1
Church of God in Christ	1
Lutheran (Evangelical Lutheran Church)	1
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod	2
Methodist	1
Non-Denominational	2
Presbyterian	1
Seventh Day Adventist	6
Universal Church of Christ	1
Wesleyan Church	1

Research Questions

Following the background information, the research questions were divided into two major headings: 1) Denominational Specific Questions; and 2) Individual Beliefs. (See Appendix A for the questionnaire.) The two headings served to separate what the Chaplain's denomination practiced from any variant the Chaplain may practice. Under the first heading, two subheadings included questions regarding church members (non-clergy) and ordained clergy. The intent of the subheadings was first, to determine if clergy were treated differently following a divorce than non-clergy and second, to learn if a restoration process was in place for divorced clergy.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey results are discussed in two sections: Divorce in General and Divorce in Ministry, with comparisons between the two groups being described. The *individual beliefs* section of the survey will then be examined. The intent is to determine if there are common themes in relation to acceptable reasons for divorcing, the approach to providing pastoral counseling, and if military service impacts the Chaplains' perspective.

Divorce In General

All of the twenty- three participants report their denominations permit divorce for church members. Five denominations view divorce as disqualifying a person from holding church office or positions. But of these five groups, there are certain qualifiers that are considered. First, the disqualification may be temporary and not permanent. Second, because of the autonomous nature of the individual churches, removal from or prevention of holding church office is determined on a case-by-case basis. Third, disqualification is based on whether the person is at fault in the divorce (i.e., the adulterer, abuser, etc.). Fourth, the person must be willing to repent of any sin and change the action or behavior that contributed to the divorce.

Three categories emerged in responding to the question "Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?" Nine participants stated that divorce for any reason is accepted. Fourteen said divorce is permissible for special circumstances. One participant said a divorced person is disqualified from even holding a staff position in the

church. However, this participant did give a conflicting answer by saying that other than pastor, deacon, and staff member, other positions are permitted for divorced members.

Circumstances permitting divorce vary from denomination to denomination. The table below lists the responses and the number of times each was cited in the survey.

Table 2. Accepted Reasons for Divorce

Abuse, Adultery	3
Abuse, Adultery, Abandonment	4
Abuse, poverty	1
Adultery	5
Gross misconduct	1
Mental, spiritual wellbeing	1
Violation of marital vows	1

Adultery is the most frequently accepted reason for divorce. It is specifically cited twelve times either as the sole reason or in combination with other circumstances. If the reasonable assumption is made that *violation of marital vows* and *gross misconduct* includes adultery, then adultery is used fourteen times as a reason for a church member to divorce.

Abuse is the second highest supported reason for divorce in the denominations represented. It is specifically cited eight times. Again, if the assumption is made to include *gross misconduct*, *mental and spiritual wellbeing*, and *violation of marital vows*, the cited number for abuse rises to eleven times.

Of the remaining acceptable reasons for divorce, abandonment is given four times. It is unclear what the participant meant by the single mention of poverty. It would be reasonable to assume since the person also cites abuse that poverty may include being

deprived of basic necessities. If this reasoning is accepted, the use of *mental and spiritual wellbeing* may also allude to actions that deprive the other of support or that are detrimental to the marriage. In the literature review this circumstance is referred to in the imagery of the marriage being dead because of the actions of one party.

Divorce in Ministry

Ministers that are divorced face similar results as non-clergy members who are divorced. In comparison, five denominations view divorce as a disqualifier from pastoral ministry and from non-clergy positions. Only one participant cited divorce as not permissible for ministers and that the minister's ordination would be removed if a divorce occurred.

Eight Chaplains said divorce is permissible for any reason, while fourteen participants said divorce was permissible under special circumstances. One participant stated that the special circumstances were up to the local church. The special circumstances are in line with the circumstances listed for church members. The table below lists the special circumstances and the number of times each circumstance is cited. In the survey, some of the participants described the special circumstances as "same for members."

Table 3. Special Circumstances for Divorce

Adultery	4
Adultery, abuse	2
Adultery, abuse, Abandonment	1
Adultery, abuse, violence, poverty	1
Mental, spiritual, physical wellbeing	1
Same as Members	5

Adultery is specifically mentioned eight times. Abuse is mentioned four times and abandonment once. When factored in with the *same as members* category, adultery and abuse are the most denominationally accepted reasons for pastors to get a divorce. These results are similar to the results for church members previously cited.

Only nine of the twenty-three surveys indicated there were processes for restoration. The most common restoration process was a meeting with denominational leadership such as a District Superintendent, denominational church board or regional conference. Of the nine having a restoration process, four listed this approach.

Other methods of restoration included time away from the pulpit, providing a time to heal following the legal process of divorce, and after a period of repentance. Each of these methods is handled without a specified time of duration. The focus appears to be on ministering to the minister and ensuring emotional and spiritual healing has occurred before resuming the leadership role. The one exception to the restoration process is if the sinful behavior is repetitive, the pastor may then be dismissed from the church and never restored.

Individual Beliefs

Navy Chaplains operate in a pluralistic environment. Rather than ministering to people of the same denomination or faith group, Chaplains have to minister to service members from numerous faith traditions. The individual beliefs section of the survey was designed to determine if this variable had any impact on the day-to-day ministry practices of the participants.

All participants are willing to perform weddings for previously divorced service members. There are various requirements regarding taking time to heal after the divorce, searching for God's will and direction, and spiritual reflection. In the eyes of the participants, performing a wedding for a divorced person does not appear to be an endorsement of divorce, but a ministry to the person.

Three of the twenty-three respondents would never counsel a person to remarry after being divorced and five would not counsel a person to ever get a divorce.¹⁰ Not all Chaplains view their role as giving advice one way or the other. As one participant said, "I would refrain from telling someone what to do in [a] relationship. I put forward principles and let them decide...." This indicates that some of the responses to this question may not be based on theological position, but rather based on counseling strategies.

Only one of the Chaplains admitted to not always following the traditions of the denomination regarding the practices of divorce. This may be accounted for by the belief

¹⁰ It is unclear from the survey whether the position to never counsel someone to remarry or to get a divorce is based on theological beliefs or the practice of not giving direct advice. The focus groups raised both perspectives.

in the autonomy of the local church. If the church or the minister has the authority to decide how to handle or address situations, this lack of adherence should not be viewed as being unfaithful to one's denomination, but rather as a minister exercising the right to minister based on the established freedom provided by the denomination.

For the majority of Chaplains who would counsel a person to get a divorce, the common reasons for such guidance follows the previously discussed justification for divorce. When abuse or physical danger is present, thirteen participants would advise divorcing. Eight Chaplains cite Biblical reasons of adultery and abandonment as justification to end the marriage. Finally, three say that when the marriage reaches a point of unhealthiness or is leading the person away from God, divorce is acceptable.

From the perspectives of the participants, military service does not appear to be a variable in how divorce is treated by Chaplains. All of the participants, except one Baptist, adhere to their denominational traditions.¹¹ The common themes of divorce for abuse, adultery, and abandonment appear prevalent and consistent whether in the church or in the military. If there was one possible difference between military Chaplains and civilian pastors it might be that since Chaplains frequently counsel people from outside their denomination, they may be less likely to directly advise the service member than they would a parishioner. This would require a follow-up study that exceeds the scope of this research.

¹¹ Since Baptists believe in the autonomy of the local church, Baptist Chaplains are not required to follow a particular position on marriage. This participant uses a case by case approach.

Differences within the Denominations

There are four specific denominations in the survey that have multiple responders. The two Lutheran Church Missouri Synod responders were very similar in their answers as were the African Methodist-Episcopal responses. However, the two Southern Baptist and the six Seventh-day Adventist responses differ in several answers.

Southern Baptists are autonomous in their tradition and practice. One responder says divorce is permitted for special circumstances and that it is up to the local church how it is handled. The other Southern Baptist says divorce is never permitted and it is an automatic disqualifier from pastoral ministry. One adheres to the practices of the denomination while the other does not. Both have divorced members in their families.

Because of the number of Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA) responding to the survey, a clearer picture of diversity is presented. All six participants state the divorce is permitted for adultery and abandonment, and that even ministers can be divorced. However, two SDA hold that divorce disqualifies a non-clergy person from holding a position within the church. Additionally, the SDA participants are divided equally as to whether or not to counsel a person to get a divorce. One person also would not advise a divorced person to ever remarry.

The results indicate that even within denominations, there is disagreement in how to handle divorce. This may be due to one of several reasons. First, individual church practices may practice a degree of autonomy in handling issues of divorce. A second possibility is the lack of a clear stance from the denomination on the procedure for processing divorce in the church. Third, denominations with regional, area or circuit

structures may hold to the positions of Bishops or Boards that may establish a local policy rather than a denominational wide position. Another possibility may involve personal preference in regards to how to approach the subject of divorce.

Regardless of the reason for the interdenominational diversity, the survey indicates that approaches to divorce can be complicated. Where there is the absence of a stated denominational perspective, the treatment of a divorced person may be based on things other than denominational beliefs. Local traditions may be just as impactful.

FOCUS GROUPS

As stated earlier, the focus groups were not part of the original research design. However, the topic of the survey created a large amount of discussion between Chaplains that proved insightful. After further reading in the area of research design and validation of outcomes, conducting focus groups after the survey seemed appropriate to the purpose of the research and helpful in validating the application of the research. “Focus groups are most useful for getting at complex underlying notions...” like the topic of divorce.¹²

“In a focus group, the interviewer is essentially a facilitator of the group discussion.”¹³ To verify the usefulness of the data, two focus groups of four people each were interviewed. The first consisted of senior Chaplains who could provide insight based on past experiences in ministering to divorced service members and Chaplains. The

¹² Shank, *Qualitative Research*, 48.

¹³ Trochim and Donnelly, *The Research Methods*, 120.

second group was comprised of Chaplains in their first tour of duty. The goal was to gauge how they anticipated using the data in the future.

Interviews “involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from participants.”¹⁴ The purpose of the informal setting is not for the group to challenge the data but to determine the usefulness to ministry. Because “data collection in informal settings are often more trustworthy” the two groups will be able to evaluate the value of this research from two different perspectives.¹⁵ The senior group can reflect on the value based on their experiences in the Chaplaincy. The junior group can view the value of the data based on what they anticipate their needs will be in the Chaplain Corps.

Due to scheduling issues and geographical distances between the participants the focus groups were conducted as a working lunch.¹⁶ The focus groups were briefed on the type of research and the purpose. All of the participants in the focus group took part in the survey. The results were revealed and the groups were asked to discuss the usefulness of the information. All the participants in the two groups took an active and collegial part in the discussions. Forty-five minutes were set aside for the discussions, but both groups continued longer. It is assumed that if the participants had not been required to return to work after lunch, the discussions would have continued much longer.

The common ground between both groups is the real-world need for open discussions concerning divorce and the appropriate ministry to those who have been

¹⁴ Creswell, *Research Design*, 181.

¹⁵ Shank, *Qualitative Research*, 153.

¹⁶ The focus group with senior Chaplains was conducted on 2 June 2015. The focus group with junior Chaplains was conducted 3 June 2015.

divorced. The discussions revealed that several Chaplains had dealt with the issue of divorce in their previous ministry and were well acquainted with the pain divorce caused to the person and the impact it had on the individual's relationship with God and the church. The discussion of divorce, and particularly the divorce of a minister, was not viewed as a theoretical issue by anyone in either focus group.

Senior Chaplains

Years of experience for the senior Chaplain group ranged from thirteen years to twenty-three years. After briefly revealing key data points from the survey, the discussion began with the question of how this information could be of use in military ministry. Each person expressed their thoughts. Following this round, the discussion began to free-flow, with experiences and thoughts being shared, just as Creswell describes in his discussion of focus groups.¹⁷

Experiences described ranged from ministering to parishioners struggling with divorce to seeing fellow Chaplains who either had gone through a divorce or were facing a divorce, endure the ordeal of trying to maintain their endorsements. Divorced colleagues were also described as attempting to regain respect for their ministries. Frequently the comments used words like *pain, shame, feeling ostracized, and being unclean*.

The senior Chaplains shared their beliefs that discussions on divorce were needed. However, there is a sense of reluctance to discuss the issue unless the group is considered

¹⁷ Creswell, *Research Design*, 181.

safe. None of the Chaplains were previously familiar with the categories of beliefs regarding divorce and remarriage or the four views on 1 Timothy 3:2. They concurred that some form of literature is needed to educate Chaplains. Additionally, they felt the need to have literature to distribute to service members who were going through divorce. The possibility of a web-based resource site was also mentioned.

Their recommendation regarding the literature is it should include a broad overview of divorce and the categories, faith groups who support the particular views, the type of care that is available within the military system, and a description of the possible issues the person will face. Their belief is that if Chaplains are not aware of the above information, then it is very likely the person seeking help is unaware as well. Regardless of the position a particular Chaplain takes on divorce, the participants each agreed that ministry to the person must be a priority.

The senior Chaplains felt that the focus group with junior Chaplains would enable the junior Chaplains to begin thinking through their approaches to pastoral care for divorced service members. It is believed that this type of discussion at the beginning of their careers could lead to other open discussions on various topics that senior Chaplains have not been able to participate in throughout their careers. This would naturally lead to more effective ministry in the years to come.

Junior Chaplains

The junior Chaplain focus group consisted of four active duty Navy Chaplains in their first tour of duty. The four groups represented were Christian Reformed, Latter Day

Saints, Orthodox, and Southern Baptist. The years of experience ranged from nine months to three years. As with the senior Chaplains, a brief report of the data was given and discussions began. Unlike the senior Chaplains, the junior Chaplains were more hesitate in the beginning. But after ten minutes or so, the discussions flowed openly and freely.

Two of the Chaplains were from divorced families. One participant said watching his parents' divorce has made him "more harsh in dealing with divorce" because he knows the damage that divorce has on children. He added that "children can feel like an 'addendum' to the newly formed family."

The other Chaplain said the opposite was true for him and that he understands "sometimes it is better to divorce than to stay together." He places a "high value on marriage" and tries to help the couple work through the issues, but understands that sometimes the marriage is truly over or beyond repair. He views his place as using his childhood memories of pain as an entry point to minister to the family without judging them.

All four Chaplains agreed that people in the church may treat divorced members as unclean. One Chaplain suggested "some may feel uncomfortable around divorced people simply because they do not know what to say" and that the treatment may not be intentional. It was suggested that education is needed in churches on how to deal with and minister to divorced people. But all contend that this treatment is not "endorsed," but rather a condition created by individual church members.

Two of the participants come from theological traditions that regard marriage as being for "time and eternity." Regarding divorced ministers the Orthodox Chaplain stated

that if a person is ordained when he is single, he must remain single for life. If an ordained minister gets divorced or his spouse dies, his ordination is removed. He can still function in other roles but never again as a Priest. Marriage is considered to be for this life and for eternity. Latter Day Saints also ascribed to “time and eternity” regarding marriage.

A common bond between Latter Day Saints and Christian Reformed is the practice that a divorced minister is removed from his position for a period of restoration. Ministers who remarry after divorce can be reinstated to the pastoral office with approval from the governing body. In this case, the removal is to allow the healing for the minister and to provide the elders with the opportunity to minister to the divorced pastor. This period includes reflection on what led to the situation and issues of repentance and forgiveness. Removal from office “should not be viewed as a disciplinary action or as punishment,” but as ministering to the individual.

The need for a resource was discussed. One participant said the resource could be used to help Chaplains know the possible combinations of beliefs. None of them were previously aware of the four categories concerning divorce and remarriage. Another chaplain said it would be good to give the person seeking help so they could develop an understanding of various positions regarding the divorce.

The consensus of the group was “chaplains meet people where they are, and not where we think they should be.” The four participants agreed that Chaplains are typically less rigid than their civilian counterparts because of the pluralistic environment of the Navy. They felt there is a need for this form of dialogue to enhance awareness of other points of belief.

A concluding thought from the junior Chaplain focus group was the surprise that senior Chaplains had not experienced this form of interaction earlier in their career. These Chaplains are younger and appear eager to discuss and learn from others. They each had their own beliefs but confessed the desire to hear the beliefs of other Chaplains from various denominations.

PROJECT DESIGN SUMMARY

“A survey design provides a...description of tends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population.”¹⁸ This survey described the views of twenty-three active duty Navy Chaplains from twelve different faith groups regarding divorce and the roles of non-clergy and clergy. The survey was not intended to unify the positions or critique the views held by the participants. The intent was merely to collect data to compare with the literature review and to determine if a resource regarding divorce would be useful in ministry.

The two focus groups of senior and junior Chaplains clarified some of the data and provided a clearer perspective on divorce and how it is handled in various faith groups. Experiences stemming from divorce in their own families, as well as within their churches provided insight into their ministry towards divorce ministers and parishioners. The focus groups also created self-propelling discussions between colleagues and served to educate each other on the particulars of their faith groups.

¹⁸ Creswell, *Research Design*, 145.

CHAPTER 5 OUTCOMES

Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body. Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter...

-Ecclesiastes 11:12a-13a

This thesis-project has sought to understand how denominations handle the painful event of divorce in the ranks of ministers. Didactic Biblical passages and historical accounts were studied, more than one hundred resources were consulted, twenty-three people from fourteen denominations participated in the survey, and two focus groups were conducted. Standards for handling divorce involving non-clergy were discovered and compared to standards in place for handling divorce among the clergy. Similarities were observed, as well as differences.

The purpose of this thesis-project was to increase understanding of the possible approaches to handling divorce and to clarify which denominations ascribed to each of the approaches. The ultimate goal was to provide those ministers who were going through a divorce or who have already endured divorce, a sense of direction or a resource that might help ease the pain and confusion of their experience. The purpose was never to establish a single Biblical perspective for people to follow.

Intellectual answers garnered from the research do not guarantee comfort and healing. However, a practical application based on those answers can guide a person down the path of healing and restoration. That practical application is the ultimate outcome of this research.

PERSONAL VIEW

As previously noted by Laney, Biblical interpretation must be guided by truth and not experience.¹ However, the same can be said for deeply held denominational traditions passed down from generation to generation. Experiencing an event can result in altering or changing a belief if the event has resulted in a fresh re-examination of Scripture. This was the case with William A. Heth as he describes in his more recent writings.²

Raised in a conservative denomination, I held to the belief that marriage was a covenant that could only be broken when one spouse committed adultery. If this was the reason for the divorce, then remarriage for the innocent person was permissible. However, if the person happened to be a minister, the person was disqualified from pastoral service. This was the view I was taught and never bothered to challenge. In truth, it was not something I even considered researching for the first ten years of my ministry.

But as pastoral experiences mounted, I saw the pain divorce caused and the numerous circumstances not addressed directly in Scripture. Issues of spousal abuse, child abuse, emotional abuse, internet pornography, online chat rooms leading to emotional affairs and “cyber” sex, drug abuse, and criminal behavior, etc. caused me to reconsider the denominational traditions I had inherited. Many of these acts would have resulted in the stoning of the guilty party in Old Testament times. However, modern civil laws do not permit the death penalty for adultery and advances in technology were unheard of in Biblical times.

¹ Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 16.

² William A. Heth, “Jesus on Divorce: How My Mind Has Changed,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 4-26, accessed June 13, 2015, http://wisereaction.org/ebooks/heth_mind_changed.pdf.

Using the required design for this thesis, traditions, proof texts, and pre-conceived ideas were set aside and Scripture was read from Genesis to Revelation in search of teachings and examples of marriage, divorce and how both were addressed in the unfolding of Biblical revelation. As the Biblical Theology of divorce and remarriage developed, my original position began to change. Coupled with exegetical practices in viewing Scripture apart from traditions and placing the contextual interpretation of passages in their historical settings, the position of divorce and remarriage for various circumstances seemed more in line with true Biblical application.

This does not imply divorce for any reason. Scripture allows divorce for adultery and abandonment. However, Scripture never specifically says these are the only reasons. Paul added abandonment to Jesus' teaching on adultery because of historical circumstances facing Christians that were not applicable in Jesus' time. Therefore, it does not seem heretical to use Paul's logic of addressing current circumstances and showing grace in the application of Biblical teaching. The only other option is to impose a *Pharisee like* standard that is not possible to live by and refuses to acknowledge the real world impact of sin.

In like manner, when viewed from an exegetical standpoint, it does not appear the phrase "husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2) was ever meant to be used as a prohibition against divorce or as a standard for disqualifying a person from the ministry. The intent of using it as a standard may have been noble in the effort to emphasize the stable home life of the minister, but it is an unfortunate interpretation. Translating the phrase as "a man of one woman" seems to more accurately convey what Paul intended.

A divorced Christian may be left to feel like a failure or as one who is unclean, whether intentional or not by other Christians. Regardless of the position one takes on the divorce and remarriage debate, there is no Scripture teaching that a failed or successful marriage is the standard to measure a person's devotion to God, spiritual maturity, or worthiness to serve in the church. Even if the position is taken that divorce and remarriage are never allowed, there is still a need to minister to the divorced person and show the person that forgiveness is obtainable, as with all other sins a person commits.

It is unfortunate that divorce has become the measuring rod used to judge a person's relationship with God and devotion to Christianity. Divorce is a painful, life-altering event that leaves wounds in need of healing for years. The divorced person can experience the same range of emotions any other victim of a tragedy encounters. However, far too often the divorced person is not only neglected by the bride of Christ, but is judged and condemned by those who should be the first ones a fellow Christian turns to for support.

Prisoners freed from prison, addicts who have completed treatment, longtime enemies who have repented and been forgiven, and those who return after wandering from the faith can all find a home in the body of Christ. Their restoration is celebrated and God's power of transformation is praised. But the divorced church member and the divorced minister, especially, are frequently treated as unclean and unworthy of church office or even fellowship. There is an urgent need for Christians to change the currently prevalent lack of ministry to divorced Christians and ministers.

OBSERVATIONS

Observations from this research are derived from several perspectives that included Biblical, literary, the use of a survey, and focus groups. As with all theological research, the Bible was the starting point. This was followed by what published authors and scholars said, and how they interpreted Scripture. Combining the discoveries of these two perspectives, a similar group of individuals (active duty Navy Chaplains) were queried via survey and their answers were then discussed with two specific groups of people (first tour and senior Chaplains). As a result of this research, three observations are summarized.

Observations from Biblical Theology

God's original plan for marriage was one man and one woman in a covenant relationship for life. The Bible never directs this plan to change. However, the Bible records various alternatives in the form of regulating divorce, one man having multiple wives, the use of concubines, and the sending away of spouses for religious reasons as historic examples. Some of the Biblical teaching is clear, while other passages are less precise.

When a Biblical Theology is developed and Scriptural texts are placed in context, the concept of divorce and remarriage appear less of a qualifying factor for pastoral service and church membership, and more of an issue warranting a case-by-case review in keeping with many other characteristics of Christian life. This does not imply that

divorce and remarriage should be considered as common or unimportant. However, neither should a person's divorce and/or remarriage be the prime standard of one's relationship with God or ability to serve in the church.

Scripture is clear that forgiveness can be granted for any sin when confession is made. There are no passages separating divorce from a list of other forgivable sins. No examples are included in Scripture of a person committing a sin, like divorcing a spouse, and their actions resulted in disqualifying their former spouse from service, as a spouse could do by divorcing a spouse who is a minister. Scripture does say that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven (I John 1:9) and that God "does not treat us as our sins deserve" (Psalm 103:10) but rather removes them and cast them "as far as the east is from the west" (v.12) and "hurl[s] all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19b).

To use Malachi's statement, "I hate divorce" (2:16) as a proof text for prohibiting divorce is to overlook the numerous other things God hates as well, like lying, violence, a false witness (Proverbs 6:16-19), and robbery (Isaiah 61:8). Issues such as lying, anger, lust, greed, and envy are addressed more frequently than divorce, and yet none of these are used by churches as standards for service. It can only be supposed that, since divorce is a measurable item and the others are not, divorce has developed into the *cultural determining factor* for suitability in Christian service even though it is not presented that way in Scripture.

Arising from a Biblical Theology, without considerations from current trends, beliefs, or denominational practices, marriage was clearly intended to be a lifelong commitment between husband and wife. Divorce is not encouraged nor is it the recommended course of action. However, it is acknowledged as a reality in a fallen world

and, therefore, is regulated in Scripture. Divorce does not please God and does not portray the New Testament example of marriage. It is not, however, the unpardonable sin or the single factor to determine a person's ability to serve in the church.

Observations from Literature Review

As noted in the above section, Scripture does not address the issues of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Nor does the Bible provide guidance for cyber offenses, drug use, or other modern issues relating to reasons for getting a divorce. Current literature attempts to address some of the issues and apply Biblical solutions by presenting four major positions concerning divorce and remarriage. The beliefs and interpretations from Scripture regarding divorce and remarriage range from there being no reason to ever divorce a spouse, to divorcing for a variety of circumstances. Valid points are made on behalf of each perspective.

The literature reviewed presented three areas that are frequently not considered when discussing the issue of divorce and remarriage. First, the concept of *death of the marriage* is raised. When “fundamental assaults on the meaning of the marriage covenant” occur in the form of abuse, neglect that endangers a person’s health, and other forms of betrayal, the marriage can be viewed as dead.³ The death of the marriage is symbolized in Jesus’ words to a disciple who wanted to delay his departure to follow Jesus to bury his father. “But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead’ (Matthew 8:22).” Jesus was apparently saying that anything that hinders us from

³ Keener, *Remarriage*, 112.

serving God completely can be regarded as dead. When a marriage arrives at that point, the marriage can be considered dead.

The second area literature presents is *the change in civil law*. In the past, the death penalty was applied in cases of adultery. Religious authorities made the determination on whether a divorce could occur in the eyes of the church. Civil law no longer permits such actions and has placed the legal authority to decide in the hands of local governing bodies rather than congregations or church leaders. As a result, there is a need to alter the Christian perspectives on divorce and remarriage.

If adultery were still grounds for issuing the death penalty, then remarriage after the spouse was executed would not be an issue. Jesus used the analogy that looking “at a woman lustfully” results in adultery with her in the heart (Matthew 5:28). If the church viewed abuse or cyber issues as deserving the death penalty, again, remarriage would not be an area of debate. Therefore, the change in civil law has brought about the need for a change in the understanding and approach of divorce and remarriage.

A third area frequently overlooked in the debate is *Paul's words in I Corinthians 7:15*. After discussing marriage and divorce, Paul says, “God has called us to live in peace.” Similar to the death of the marriage, Paul’s guidance regarding a marriage that becomes so entrenched in sin and disharmony can possibly be viewed as justifying a divorce in an attempt to re-establish peace. God established marriage as a means of companionship and to provide a spouse to help in His service. If the marriage is doing the opposite and a spouse refuses to repent, Paul’s guidance can be considered grounds for ending the marriage.

The literature also provides a range of interpretations to 1 Timothy 3:2. Several arguments are based on Greek word usage and exegetical principles. Views range from seeing the phrase “husband of one wife” as a prerequisite for pastoral ministry to meaning one wife in a lifetime. The common view in some churches is to view the phrase as a prohibition for ministers to divorce. In this view, divorce is grounds for disqualification from ministry.

One view presented in literature is based on translating the phrase in 1 Timothy 3:2 as “a man of one woman” and places Paul’s statement as a matter of character for the minister, rather than as a statement of marital status.⁴ This translation sees the list in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 as descriptive of the characteristics of a minister and does not view “husband of one wife” differently than the other qualities listed in the text. Neither should these verses be used as a checklist to disqualify someone from the office of pastor.

Observations from Survey and Focus Groups

As expected, the survey and focus groups displayed disagreement in both the issue of divorce and remarriage and in the issue of divorce disqualifying a minister from pastoral ministry. What was not anticipated was the lack of consensus even within various denominations on how divorce and remarriage should be handled. Rather than a denominational policy, some denominations leave the decision to regional or district authorities.

⁴ Glasscock, *The Husband of One Wife*, 249.

The most interesting observation was the lack of restorative plans or procedures in place to minister to those who are divorced. This was especially true for divorced ministers. Only nine of the participants stated their denominations had a restorative process for ministers who were divorced. None of the participants knew of anything in place to help divorced church members.

During the focus groups, I mentioned Cornes' statement that the church should be "the lead agent in reaching out to those who have been hurt by divorce" and his recommendation that "an informal ceremony of forgiveness" be conducted.⁵ All of the participants agreed that this was a proper Biblical approach. However, none of them had ever heard of it being used for church members.

The survey and focus groups demonstrated that some denominations have developed a standard regarding divorce and remarriage, but there was an absence in the ministry to those who were divorced. Unfortunately, as one participant stated, "people may feel uncomfortable around divorced people" and as a result, the divorced person is ignored or shunned.

Fortunately, the focus groups demonstrated an interest in learning to minister to divorced members and pastors. They also accepted the differences between each other with understanding and a willingness to "meet people where they are and not where we think they should be." Even in the denominations that disqualify divorced ministers from pastoral service, there is a recognized need to provide ministry to ministers who are divorced.

⁵ Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 359-420.

PRACTICAL OUTCOME

Based on the feedback from the focus groups there is a need and desire for Navy Chaplains to have a resource they can use and distribute regarding divorce. Additionally, Chaplains indicated the need to have a resource stating which denominations held to which positions so they could make the appropriate referral if needed. A resource would also serve to help ministers, who are going through a divorce themselves, know where they can turn for assistance and support.

In the military setting, pamphlets and small booklets are typically used to convey information regarding support programs and educational material. These resources are designed to be easily carried and readily used whether on a base or while deployed. This allows the individual to carry the resource in the pocket without drawing attention from others, which could result in possible shame or embarrassment.

The pamphlet arising from this research is a two-sided document created in Word Publisher and can be easily reproduced as needed. It can be adapted to include local phone numbers or links to websites the Chaplain's denomination supports or those websites that are deemed useful. The format is in keeping with other pamphlets one might find in a Chaplain's office.

Content and Message

The pamphlet (see Appendix C) "Divorce & Remarriage: Information to help during a difficult time" begins with five questions arising from divorce. Each column is

headed by one of the questions. The pamphlet is not comprehensive, but is designed to answer initial questions and can be useful to begin the dialogue with another person.

The first question raised is “What does the Bible say about divorce?” The four common belief categories revealed in the literature review are listed. It does not say which one is correct, but illustrates to the reader that there are different views on the issue. This also helps Chaplains realize the various perspectives covered by different denominations.

The second question, “Can any Chaplain help me?” addresses the concern people have when going through a divorce. The explanation points out that while Chaplains are representatives of their own denominational practices, they can still be of help to a hurting person without pressuring the person to adopt the view held by the Chaplain. It also addresses the emotional need the person may not realize will be present during this period.

During the crisis of a divorce, the person may wish to speak to a Chaplain who shares their beliefs or represents their denomination. The section entitled, “How do I find a Chaplain who supports my beliefs on divorce?” addresses this need. It identifies, based on the survey, which denominations hold to which of the four categories regarding divorce and remarriage. It also shows that two Chaplains from the same denomination may hold different views. This list provides the Chaplain with a resource for referring a person to a particular Chaplain, just as some of the members of the focus groups requested.

The last question to be addressed is “What happens if a minister gets divorced?” Ministers who get divorced may not be acquainted with the different interpretations of

1 Timothy 3:2, “husband of one wife.” This section of the pamphlet addresses the various views presented in the literature review, without suggesting which view is correct. This allows the minister to consider the options, which may guide him or her in the decision to leave or stay in the ministry. Using the denominations categorized in the previous section, the minister can determine who may be the most appropriate Chaplain to speak with about their situation.

The literature review revealed there are six major Biblical passages dealing with divorce and remarriage. These passages are listed for the reader to study. Additionally, “Obstacles you may face” is a section listing six emotional responses a divorce person may experience. Appropriate passages are also supplied for comfort and reflection.

As with any crisis a person faces, there are numerous questions and various responses to the issue. This pamphlet is designed to provide a starting point for educating a person on the various Biblical views, as well as how a Chaplain can assist. It can be used to start a sincere, fact based conversation that will provide comfort and direction during a most painful time.

It can meet the need of the person going through a divorce, as well as, helping the Chaplain know where to refer the person for denominationally specific help. Through listening to the person, the Chaplain can use the pamphlet to identify and direct the person to the most appropriate Chaplain. Lastly, it provides some direction to the minister who is either going through or contemplating a divorce so he or she knows which Chaplain best aligns with their own faith tradition. This allows the seeker to receive support and can possibly avoid unneeded conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations can be based on identified shortfalls in the current research or on the need for future research and “the direction that research might take.”⁶

Recommendations can also be the result of identified needs to apply the information learned or gathered during the research period to real world or practical situations.

Recommendations arising from this particular research fall into two categories: areas for further research and educational needs.

Shortfalls of the survey

The survey focused on the beliefs or attitudes regarding divorce. It did not focus on remarriage after divorce. While the two topics are separate, the research revealed the two areas cannot be easily addressed separately. This was made clear in the focus group with the Orthodox Christian and Latter Day Saints Chaplains. Both groups view marriage as eternal, but only Orthodox Christians disqualify ministers who become widowers. Latter Day Saints may reinstate a divorced minister after remarriage. Other groups accept divorce but not remarriage. The results would have been clearer if both topics were included.

An area unknown prior to the research was the impact of districts, regions, or other interdenominational governing bodies. It was assumed that denominations established policies for the entire denominations. The results indicated that in some

⁶ Cozby, *Methods in Behavioral Research*, 295.

denominations there are different standards based on local practices, such as the Seventh Day Adventists. The survey would have been strengthened if a question regarding local practices or individual Bishops had been included.

Lastly, while not part of the original focus, it would have been interesting to query the participants on how they feel about working with divorced ministers on a purely personal level. This question was raised briefly in the focus groups but was never explored. Churches and denominations may be willing to work with or reinstate a divorced minister, but no information was gathered on how a minister who has never been divorced feels about associating with a divorced minister.

Future Research

There are three specific areas of research that can build on this study. Each of these areas contributes to the focus of identifying denominational traditions and beliefs regarding divorce. If this study is applied, patterns may emerge to either support the present research, or the patterns may help identify unknown variables impacting the outcome of the present study.

The survey could be applied to church members who are not clergy. The parameters for this study included the exclusive involvement of active duty Navy Chaplains. A possible bias of this group is the willingness to work with other denominations. To be a Chaplain, a person must possess the mindset of working with others with different beliefs. Individual churches consist of likeminded members who may not be willing to embrace divergent views. This could result in a different outcome.

Non-clergy members may also possess a different expectation of the criteria for ministers. They may view the standard for themselves and for their ministers as different regarding divorce and remarriage. Additionally, non-clergy may be more incline to use a proof text such as, “I hate divorce” (Malachi 2:16), rather than conduct an in depth study of what Scripture says.

The survey can be administered to civilian ministers. Civilian ministers are not required to work in the pluralistic environment as are Navy Chaplains. This environment might contribute to the individual Chaplain’s willing to accept divorce and perform weddings for previously married couples. The survey results stemming from civilian ministers may indicate that the environment influences the responses more than the participants realized.

The survey can be administered to governing bodies. Knowing how ministers, parishioners, and Chaplains believe regarding divorced ministers is only part of the study. With the exception of denominations practicing local autonomy, such as Baptists, the governing bodies of denominations have the ultimate voice in what happens to a minister who is divorced. The research would be enhanced by knowing what governing bodies believe regarding divorce and even remarriage.

All research must have a starting point. This research serves well as the starting point, and also, as a source of information for Navy Chaplains. Further research involving the three groups mentioned would provide a much clearer and accurate picture of the issue. The different results from the different groups can be compared to each other, and then processed collectively to show how divorced ministers are viewed, treated, and ministered to following a divorce.

Educational Recommendations

The Church should be the educational body for Christians. It should provide the opportunity to learn not only about Scripture, but how to implement Biblical teaching into everyday life. The Church has frequently been silent on the issue of divorce and remarriage. There is a great need for the Church to change its practice of silence and become a place that is “inclusive and welcoming, not exclusive and discriminatory.”⁷

Open Discussions should be conducted in Bible Study services to bring all the issues surrounding divorce and remarriage to the forefront. Just as the focus groups of Chaplains revealed a degree of amazement over the various views and the variables frequently not considered when speaking about divorce, open discussions could reveal the same from parishioners. Many people may be living in embarrassing and painful situations and are afraid to voice their concerns. Open discussions in a church setting should provide a safe place to speak.

Bible studies or sermons can be another avenue for education. A study guide is included in Appendix D of this thesis. It is in three parts and includes the historical development of marriage in the Old Testament, the New Testament teaching regarding marriage and divorce, and a section on forgiveness and restoration. The latter part also includes an outline for a Service of Forgiveness.

⁷ Deasley, *Marriage & Divorce*, 183.

Regardless of the position taken in the divorce and remarriage debate, an understanding that forgiveness can be obtained is essential. There are too many people in need of healing for the church to continue to neglect their pain. Through Biblical education, the current attitude may begin to change to one of grace and mercy.

THESIS-PROJECT SUMMARY

Divorce was not part of God's stated plan in the Bible. Marriage was intended to be a great blessing that would endure a lifetime. Husbands and wives were joined together to love, support, help, and encourage their mate so that God could be served and glorified, and the couple could experience incredible joy through the security of the relationship. But sin entered the world and marriage was one of many areas of life impacted.

This thesis—project began by examining Biblical teaching concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage of non-clergy and of clergy. The literature review revealed many devoted Christian scholars have different opinions and understandings of what the Bible teaches. The survey and focus groups supported the reality of disagreements by different denominations. Some people have changed their views over time, others stand steadfast to the view they were taught and have held throughout life.

The one area of consensus is the need to practice forgiveness and to stop treating divorced people as if they were unclean. There is a growing population of church members experiencing divorce. For many of them, they are facing issues never imagined at the time of Christ or during the writing of the New Testament. Some are choosing to remain in marriages that are physically dangerous to the spouse and children because they do not know what to do or where to turn. Their fear is that leaving the marriage will mean rejection from the Church and not being forgiven by God.

Through the research of this thesis-project, I have not only changed my view of divorce and remarriage in general, but also towards divorced ministers. Even though I never stated it in these terms, in subconscious practice I saw divorce as a type of unpardonable sin that could not be forgiven. Ministers who divorced could never serve as pastors again. I did not treat divorced people as unclean, but silently doubted their devotion to God and commitment to the Christian lifestyle.

Having set aside what I believed and was taught, I reexamined the teaching of Scripture and have studied the writings of theologians and pastors with an open mind and heart. As a result, my intellectual views, as well as the attitude of my heart have changed to see divorced people as sinners in need a God's grace and mercy just like non-divorced people. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin. The divorced person is no less of a Christian than a non-divorced person just because of their marital status.

Regardless of the position the reader takes on the issue at hand, there is a desperate need to minister to hurting people who have endured divorce. This is especially true for the minister who has been divorced. Even if the decision is made to discontinue pastoral ministry, there is still the need to understand that forgiveness can be obtained through repentance and that God is able to forgive and cleanse.

“The Church’s actions will not change until its attitude changes, and its attitude will not change until its understanding changes.”⁸ The change must begin with a fresh review of Scripture and a reflection on God’s grace. It is doubtful there will ever be an agreement on the issue, but at least there can be an agreement that there is a need for ministry to those who are divorced, to include ministers.

⁸ Deasley, *Marriage & Divorce*, 183.

APPENDIX A

Research Questions for Participants

Background

1. What is your marital status?
2. Are there divorced members in your family?
3. Identify your denomination or faith group?
4. How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?

Denominational Specific Questions

Regarding church members (non-clergy)

1. Does your denomination permit divorce for church members:
 - a. For any reason?
 - b. For special circumstances?
 - i. If so, what are the circumstances? i.e. adultery, domestic abuse, sex abuse, child abuse, etc.
2. Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?
 - a. If yes, what positions are permitted?
 - b. What positions are not permitted?
3. Is there a restoration process for a divorced church member?
 - a. If so, describe the process and the length of time.
 - b. If not, what duties can the divorced minister perform?

Regarding ordained clergy

1. Does your denomination permit ministers to be divorced:
 - c. For any reason?
 - d. For special circumstances?
 - i. If so, what are the circumstances? i.e. adultery, domestic abuse, sex abuse, child abuse, etc.
2. Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?
 - a. If yes, from what type of ministry?
 - b. Is the person's ordination removed?
3. Is there a restoration process for a divorced minister?
 - a. If so, describe the process and the length of time.
 - b. If not, what duties can the divorced minister perform?

Individual Beliefs

Navy Chaplains are often given more latitude from their denominations than their civilian counterparts due to the military environment. For example, a church that practices closed communion may allow a Chaplain to offer open communion during a deployment or while overseas.

The next set of questions is about your personal beliefs and practices. The data from this section will not use denominational titles in publishing the research paper. It will be described as “some Navy Chaplains do X this different than their denomination.”

1. Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Navy Chaplain?
2. If you differ, please describe how and under what conditions?
3. Do you/would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?
4. Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce? If so, under what circumstances?
5. If a service member were divorced, would you council he or her not to remarry?

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL RESULTS OF SURVEY

To maintain the integrity of the survey results were left unchanged to include misspellings and grammatical errors. Individual responses are reproduced in the chronological order they were completed. Each page is one individual survey. The only modification is in the format. Surveys were initial recording in an excel spreadsheet, but are formatted here in Microsoft Word. In cases of a long response, a smaller font was used to get each survey on one page.

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Southern Baptist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	4.5
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Each church is autonomous and this is one area that churches can decide for themselves on issues like divorce.
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	Yes
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	It is up to the local church.
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	It is up to the local church.
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	Yes
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	It is up to the local church.
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	It is up to the local church.
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	No
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	It would depend on the circumstances in context. It would likely have to be irreconcilable differences that lead the people further away from each other and God.
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	LCMS
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	15
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Abandonment, plus what you have given as examples
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	Unrepentant sins cannot be forgiven - only those who refuse to confess their sins are kept from holding offices
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Again these plus abandonment, and in the case of clergy, must not be initiated by the man/clergy.
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	Only if unrepentant or repeated
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	Confession and absolution
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	n/a
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	for their safety and/or if they have been abandoned
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Lutheran
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	21
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	adultery, abandonment, gross misconduct
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	adultery, abandonment, gross misconduct
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	Case by case basis - adjudicated by district authorities
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	No
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	N/A
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	SBC
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	12 years
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	No
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	Yes
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	Pastor and deacon not permitted, others permitted
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	No
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	Yes
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	Pastor, Staff member, Deacon
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	If there were extreme circumstances such as physical danger
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Never married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	UCC
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	14
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	NA
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	NA
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	NA
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	NA
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	NA
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	NA
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	any unhealthy relationship where further hurt and brokenness are likely to occur. an unwillingness on the part of one or both parties to seek wholeness and healing
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Baptist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	24
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery, abuse, abandonment
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Same as above.
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	N/A
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Never married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Seventh day Adventist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	7 years
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Abuse Adultery
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	Yes
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	Members are not allowed to hold a church office for a determined time period.
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery Abuse
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	Yes
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	Possibly: If the clergy is not the party at fault then they will remain employed If the clergy is the party at fault then their employment may be terminated or the clergy might be reassigned.
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	The length of the restoration process would be determined by the Church board or Conference/Union committee that is reviewing the case. The time period and restoration recommendation are determined on a case by case basis.
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	Abuse Adultery
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Never married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Protestant
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	8
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	Depends on circumstance and the needed support
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	Abuse
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	LCMS
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	15
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	abandonment as well as what is listed
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	Unrepentant sin disqualifies, not recognizing sin as a sin
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Same as above
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	I marked NO but again, disqualifier happens when you call God a liar - that what you've done is not a sin. Justifying your sin and trying to cover it up, that will get you removed.
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	If one repents, one is restored. I think though that repeat offenders are defrocked and sent looking for another vocation.
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	n/a
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	Abandonment, infidelity, abuse etc
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes
Further responses	The last question is a maybe - some people should never marry, some can handle being alone, but many individuals are a wreck without a spouse. God intends for them to have a helpmate.

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Methodist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	5
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	Marital position is not used in determination of positions in our church.
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	No
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	N/A
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	No
Further responses	To the above question, my No is not in reference to them coming to me seeking to remarry, as I would counsel them and stress strongly premarital counseling. If a divorce person came to me for counseling and ask whether they should remarry, I would tell them No, if they were looking to escape the hard work of getting to really know themselves and what they learned of their previous marriage.

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Seventh day Adventist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	5 years
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery, domestic abuse, abandonment
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Same as above
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	Remarriage shouldn't be rushed. Member should receive counseling and spend some time healing
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	Adultery, domestic abuse
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes
Further responses	A separation or divorce which results from factors such as DV or in which infidelity is not involved does not give either one the scriptural right to remarry, unless in the meantime the other party has remarried, committed adultery, or fornication, or died. Should a member who has thus divorced remarry without these biblical grounds, he/she shall be removed from church membership. And the one whom he/she marries, if a member, shall also be removed from church membership.

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Wesleyan Church
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	7
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	For adultery as described in the bible, allowing for some attempt at reconciliation.
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	n/a
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	For adultery as described in the bible, allowing for some attempt at reconciliation.
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	n/a
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	The same regional board that follows and approves candidates for ordination follows and approves pastors for restoration. This board is made up of both clergy and elected lay persons from the region's congregations. The board is chaired by the region's District Superintendent.
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	n/a
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	For a failed restoration effort. For at risk of violence instances.
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Seventh-day Adventist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	4
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	Yes
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	Yes
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	N/A
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes
Further Responses	N/A

What is your marital status?	
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Seventh-day Adventist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	14
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery, Abuse, etc
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	Depends on why divorced and how it came to be.
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Same reasons as members
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	No
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	I would share the Biblical options, and principles and support their God influenced choice.
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	No
Further responses	The yes and no answers don't take into consideration the reasons for divorce or which party initiates a divorce, all very important factors. I would refrain from telling someone what to do in relationship...I put forward principles and let them decide with a clear understanding of the consequences of whatever course of action they take.

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Seventh-day Adventist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	7
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/R
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	No
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	N/A
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes
Further responses	Only after sufficient time had passed after a divorce due to the other partner having committed adultery.

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Seventh-day Adventist
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	3-1/2
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery, violation of marriage vow.
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery of other party.
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	Yes
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	Pastor, Elder, Deacon (any ordained position of leadership)
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	Yes
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	No
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	N/A
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes
Further responses	To clarify my response to the last question, if the service member was a Christian and his/her divorce was according to biblical grounds, I could counsel him/her to remarry.

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Presbyterian
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	16
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	n/a Please note that in your question about marital status you have not allowed for widow/widower. There are at least 2 female chaplain widows in the CHC. I am one of them..... I don't know if there are any widowers.....
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	n/a
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	n/a
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	n/a
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	n/a
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	n/a
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	Domestic violence; continual infidelity; sexual abuse - all if spouse is not willing to get help
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes
Further responses	If you mean remarry original partner - ONLY if ALL issues have been ENTIRELY resolved. If someone new, that's not a question that can be answered except in the sense that it's ok to remarry if they believe God is present and blessing the relationship.

What is your marital status?	Never married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Church of God In Christ
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	14
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	domestic abuse, violence, poverty
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	A Bishop is to remain blameless and have one spouse.
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	Adultery, domestic abuse, violence, poverty
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	I really don't know what the process is to restore the divorced minister back to the pulpit. I only know that they are "Sat Down" and not allowed to Preach for a season.
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	I'm very neutral on the subject of divorce. Growing up in the church people usually got married and stayed married no matter how "awful" the situation was. I am a product of a very toxic and dysfunctional marriage, my great-grand parents, grand parents and parents all stayed in unhealthy and unhappy marriages. I never knew what the word "Divorce" was until I matriculated thru highschool. There so many of my friends parents were divorcing it was like WOW, that is possible?
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	No
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	It is not a good practice of mine to explicitly say for someone to seek a divorce. I try to facilitate dialogue around the problem and problem solution. Only if there is abuse in the home (including child abuse) I advocate for protection and deeper therapy. I would leave it up to the couple to seek specifically "Divorce Counseling" but I do not "practice" advocating divorce.
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	No
Further responses	Again, I use counseling model of listening to their story- I never make suggestions because that can be harmful in my eyes as a counselor.

What is your marital status?	Never married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Protestant
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	7
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	If there is abuse or threat to life present.
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	Christian Reformed Church in North America
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	23
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	biblical divorce - adultery
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	Yes
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	Pastor
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for special circumstances
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	adultery domestic abuse
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	case by case basis as determined by elders of church where pastor holds membership
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	Yes
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	n/a
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	n/a
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	time and coming to grips with divorce
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	AME
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	5
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	No
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	N/A
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes
Further responses	I would only counsel a divorced member to remarry after individual soul searching and understanding on member's contribution to divorce, so that the baggage of that failed marriage is dealt with prior to entering into a NEW marriage.

What is your marital status?	Never married
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	No
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	African Methodist Episcopal
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	1
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	mental, spiritual, physical wellbeing
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	mental, spiritual, physical wellbeing
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	mental, spiritual, physical safety.
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

What is your marital status?	Divorced
Are there divorced members in your family (either immediate or extended)	Yes
Please identify your faith group or denomination.	non-denominational
How long have you been a Navy Chaplain?	5
Does your denomination permit divorce for church members?	Yes, for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify a member from holding a position in the church?	No
Regarding the above question about disqualification, please explain what positions are and are not permitted.	N/A
Does your denomination permit Ministers to be divorced?	Yes for any reason
If yes for special circumstances, please explain the special circumstances allowed for divorce.	N/A
Does divorce disqualify an ordained minister from ministry?	No
If you answered yes to divorce being a disqualifier, please indicate what type of ministry they are disqualified from.	N/A
Is the minister's ordination removed after divorce?	No
Is there a restoration process for divorced ministers?	No
If there is a restoration process, please describe the process and length of time.	N/A
Do you adhere to the practices of your denomination regarding divorce in your capacity as a Chaplain?	Yes
If you do differ from the practices, how and under what conditions?	N/A
Do you or would you perform a wedding for a military member if that person was divorced?	Yes
Would you ever counsel a person to get a divorce?	Yes
If you would counsel a person to get a divorce, what circumstances would be a factor?	If there is spousal abuse of any kind, infidelity and abandonment
If a service member were divorced, would you counsel him or her to remarry?	Yes

APPENDIX C

Trifold Pamphlet

What happens if a minister gets divorced?

1 Timothy 3:2 uses the phrase "husband of one wife." For some denominations this means that if a minister gets divorced, he or she is disqualified from serving as a pastor.

Other interpretations view this phrase as meaning the minister:

- Can only be married once
- Must be married
- Can only be married to one person at a time

Others translate the phrase as "a man of one woman." Those holding this translation view the phrase as a characteristic of the person. The minister must be faithful and devoted to the spouse, regardless if remarriage has occurred.

Bible passages on Marriage & Divorce

Genesis 2:18-25; Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12

Mark 10:2-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16

Obstacles you may face

Forgiveness- The most important thing to remember is God loves you and will forgive you (1 John 1:9). Your marital status does not determine your place in God's heart.

Anger- At yourself or spouse. Ephesians 4:25-32

Uncertainty- Of your future. Matthew 6:25-34

Sense of failure- There is no "happily ever after."

Romans 8:28-39

Fear- What happens now? Psalm 27 & Psalm 32

Depression- This is too much for me to handle!

Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

Your Chaplain can help you in the healing process and can help you understand God's forgiveness.

Divorce & Remarriage

Information to help during a difficult time

What does the Bible say about divorce?

Can I get remarried?

Can any Chaplain help me?

How do I find a Chaplain who supports my religious beliefs?

What if a minister gets divorced?

Information provided by the Chaplain's office

What does the Bible say about divorce?

God designed marriage to be for life. However, problems arise that may lead to divorce. This was not God's intent. The Bible does give conditions where divorce is permissible, but it is never required.

There are four common belief categories regarding divorce and remarriage.

1. Some believe divorce is never an option regardless of what has happened.
2. Some believe divorce is permissible, but remarriage (unless it is to the divorced spouse) can never occur.
3. Others believe a person can divorce and remarry if the other spouse commits adultery. (Some add abandonment as a reason.)
4. Finally, some believe there are a variety of reasons for getting a divorce. Some of the reasons include physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect that endangers the spouse, drug abuse, and habitual acts that threaten the welfare of the other person.

Can any Chaplain help me?

Chaplains are endorsed by specific denominations. They are authorized to represent only what their traditions teach. For instance, a Baptist Chaplain cannot perform a Catholic baptism.

But Chaplains can still help you with non-specific denominational issues. If you speak to your Chaplain about getting a divorce or if you already are divorced, the Chaplain will provide counseling and guidance for your situation. The Chaplain may tell you what his or her beliefs are, but will never force you to accept their beliefs.

If your Chaplain is not able to help you, he or she will put you in contact with a Chaplain who can.

Remember, divorce is not just about ending a marriage. It also involves how you are coping, what you are feeling, dealing with grief, and many other issues. Even if your Chaplain does not believe in divorce, he or she still cares about you and wants to minister to you.

How do I find a Chaplain who supports my beliefs on divorce?

Even within denominations there are differences on divorce. But as a guide to begin with, this is how some denominations view the four categories of:

1. No divorce:
Christian Orthodox; Some Baptists
2. Divorce but No Remarriage:
Some Baptist

2. Divorce and remarriage for adultery or abandonment:

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod; Seventh day Adventist; Wesleyan Church; Church of God in Christ; Christian Reformed

2. Divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances:

Evangelical Lutheran; Universal Church of Christ; Seventh day Adventist; Presbyterian; African Methodist Episcopal

APPENDIX D **STUDY GUIDE**

FOUR VIEWS FROM SCRIPTURE (PART 1)

Christian literature reveals there are four positions regarding divorce and remarriage.

The positions are categorized as:

- No Divorce
- Divorce, No remarriage
- Divorce, Remarriage for adultery
- Divorce, Remarriage for various circumstances

How can people arrive at such diverse opinions? A survey of the Bible reveals that marriage and divorce are not necessarily as clear as we might expect. Marriage went through numerous changes in Biblical history. Not all of these changes were in accordance with God's will, but they were a reality. Frequently, God used the changes in marriages as part of His plan. Even though God "hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16), He gave regulations governing it.

Historical Biblical Development of Marriage in the Old Testament

1. Original Intent of Marriage
 - a. Genesis 2:18-25
 - i. God said it is not good for man to be alone. Woman was created as a "suitable helpmate."
 - ii. Luther's thought: If the marriage is not meeting the Divine intent, i.e. a helpmate, sexual fulfillment, and procreation (3:16), by the willful actions of a spouse, then a divorce is warranted.
2. Deviations and changes from the original intent
 - a. Genesis 4:19
 - i. Lamech having two wives is the first record of the practice of bigamy.
 - ii. This act is neither condemned nor condoned.
 - b. Genesis 24:3
 - i. This is the first mention of an arranged marriage.

- ii. It is unclear if this was the standard practice or not.
 - c. Genesis 29:15-30
 - i. Jacob marries two women.
 - ii. This is neither condemned nor condoned, but is used to build the nation.
 - d. Genesis 30:1-22
 - i. Maidservants were used to increase the number of children.
 - ii. This is neither condemned nor condoned.
3. Establishment laws regarding marriage
- a. Rules are given for marriage, specifically to priests.
 - i. Who the priests cannot marry (Leviticus 21:7).
 - ii. Who the priests can marry (Leviticus 21:13-15).
 - b. Rules for the general population
 - i. Let her go away (Deuteronomy 21:10-14).
 - ii. Laws regarding the treatment of two wives (Deuteronomy 21:15-17).
 - c. First mention of divorce
 - i. Prohibition against divorce for specific reasons (Deuteronomy 22:19, 29).
 - ii. First detailed discussion of divorce and remarriage (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).
 - d. Marrying brother's widow is commanded
 - i. Deuteronomy 25:5-10
 - ii. This brings up the issue of two wives.
4. Marriage in Old Testament History
- a. Marriage was used as reward (1 Samuel 17:25; 18:17).
 - b. David had several wives (2 Samuel 5:13).
 - i. David did what was just and right (2 Samuel 8:15).
 - ii. God would have given David more wives (2 Samuel 12:8).
 - c. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3).
 - i. His wives turned his heart from God (1 Kings 11:4).
 - ii. This action is condemned.
 - d. Ezra had the men send their foreign wives away (Ezra 9-10).
5. Marriage and the Prophetic Books
- a. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel use marriage as imagery symbolizing God's relationship to Israel (Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:1, 14; 11:10; Ezekiel chapter 16; 44:23).
 - b. Hosea's marriage to an adulterous wife is used of God's marriage to Israel (Hosea 3:1; 6:7).
 - i. Some view Hosea's marriage as factual.
 - ii. Some view his marriage as imagery or allegory.

- c. Malachi addresses the people and records God saying “I hate divorce” (2:16).
 - i. Other things God hates
 - 1. Robbery and iniquity (Isaiah 61:8).
 - 2. Israel (Jeremiah 12:8).
 - 3. Violence (Malachi 2:16).
 - 4. Esau (Romans 9:13).
 - 5. Seven things that people do (Proverbs 6:16-19).

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE (PART 2)

Background

1. Jesus’ teachings on divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18).

With the exception of Joseph considering divorcing Mary (Matthew 1:19), there are only four times the Gospels mention divorce. Jesus began his ministry with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7). His intent was to describe how people could model true righteousness to the world, rather than the false righteousness of the religious leaders. He addresses six specific topics and shows their relationship to the law and how they should be fulfilled, beginning in the heart of the listener (5:17-7:27).

Divorce is mentioned as the fourth topic in the Sermon on the Mount and states that divorce is acceptable only if there is marital unfaithfulness (5:31-32). Remarriage results in adultery (verse 32). Of the six topics Jesus covers, only divorce is a measurable act. Later, the Pharisees ask Jesus directly about divorce (Matthew 19:3-12). Jesus restates God’s original intent and says Moses allowed divorce, but that was not the

original plan. Jesus again restates his position that divorce is acceptable only for adultery.

2. Paul's teachings on divorce (1 Corinthians chapter 7; 1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Paul encourages people not to divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). But if they do divorce, they should remain unmarried. However, Paul adds one more exception in addition to adultery. According to Paul, if an unbelieving spouse chooses to leave, then the other spouses is not bound by the prohibition of remarriage. This was because Paul's readers faced something no other group had encountered. The advancement of Christianity led to some spouses converting from Judaism, but others did not. This led to breakups in marriages.

Paul's use of the phrase "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2) can be viewed in four ways. The first three are interpretations of the phrase; the fourth is an alternate translation. The phrase could mean, 1) one wife for a lifetime; 2) one wife at a time (no bigamy); 3) a minister must be married; or 4) it could be translated to say "a man of one woman" indicating the minister is to be faithful to his wife.

Discussion

- 1) God's original creation plan was for the man and woman to tend the Garden of Eden. How did that change?
- 2) How did marriage change from God's original plan?
- 3) How did marriage "evolve" in the Old Testament?
- 4) What are some reasons people got divorced in the Old Testament?

- 5) Why did Paul add an exception to what Jesus taught?
- 6) Did the circumstances of Paul's day justify the inclusion of abandonment?
- 7) Do issues today such as abuse or sins stemming from the internet justify changes?
- 8) How do we determine which of the four views on 1 Timothy 3:2 to accept?
- 9) While you may not agree with three of the views on marriage and divorce, can you see how the four views may have developed in reading through Scripture?

Summary

Regardless of the view we take on divorce and remarriage, the most important thing is to remember that divorce is not the unpardonable sin. Even if divorce is wrong, there can be forgiveness and restoration. A person's marital status should never be used as a qualifier or disqualifier from serving God.

FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION (PART 3)

Divorce and remarriage are sensitive areas for Christians. But regardless of the position taken on divorce and remarriage, there is a need for forgiveness. One Christian writer wrote, "Most churches have contradictions in their policies with regard to divorce in that they allow divorce for adultery but not for attempted murder."¹ Unfortunately, some hold to the belief that only reconciliation to the original spouse can provide forgiveness and restoration of a divorced person. But we should note that, "No more than murderers can repent of their actions by bringing the dead person back to life can

¹ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church*, 168.

someone who has been guilty of adultery against someone unscramble the eggs of a broken relationship.”²

The divorce person more than anyone knows the pain of guilt and the shame felt by a divorce. Forgiveness and restoration begin with repentance, the concept “of a renewed relationship with God, a fresh start, a fellowship such as existed before sin intruded.”³ The first step in helping someone is to follow Jesus’ teachings in Luke 6:37-38, “Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

By not judging or condemning, we are able to practice forgiveness and grace. The divorced person does not need the added weight of the church’s guilt. Rather, they need to know from the church body that divorce is not the unpardonable sin.

Forgiveness

1. God forgives sin when we confess (1 John 1:8-10).
2. We are not to judge others, but support and encourage them (Romans 14:1-12).
3. Forgiveness is an expectation of the Christian life (Colossians 3:12-17).
4. Nothing, including divorce, can separate us from God’s love (Romans 8:31-39).

Restoration

1. After his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, David prayed for restoration (Psalm 51:12).
2. We are to gently help restore our brother or sister (Galatians 6:1-2).
3. We all make bad decisions, but God can restore us and use us again (Luke 15:11-32).

² Shelly, *Divorce & Remarriage*, 144.

³ Deasley, *Marriage & Divorce*, 161.

Consider John Mark. He went with Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey (Acts 12:25). But shortly thereafter, he abandoned them (Acts 13:13). When it came time for Paul and Barnabas to begin the second missionary journey, Paul refused to give Mark a second chance (Acts 15:36-40). It would appear the Mark was finished. But later, Paul specifically requested for Mark to come to him “because he is helpful to me in my ministry (2 Timothy 4:11). “God forgives sin, and if we really believe this we must also believe that sinners are allowed to move on after repentance.”⁴

While sin can cause us to lose things that can never be recovered, forgiveness means God no longer holds our sin over us. When He forgives, it is remembered no more (Isaiah 43:18-19, 25). Because He is sovereign, God can cause all things, even divorce, to work out for our good (Romans 8:28).

Service of Forgiveness

Whether a divorce person caused the divorce or not, there will be feelings of guilt and failure. “I cannot stress enough that one of the greatest needs of the divorcee is to deal with his or her guilt.”⁵ An informal service of forgiveness can go a long way in helping a person seek forgiveness and accept God’s forgiveness. “This does not diminish the uniqueness of marriage vows or the seriousness of breaking them, but it does emphasize that all sins are serious and all sins are forgivable.”⁶

⁴ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church*, 136.

⁵ Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 381.

⁶ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church*, 137.

A service of forgiveness can be held at any time prior to a remarriage. Some hold it after the divorce is final and it can include friends and family or just person. Others perform the service following the wedding rehearsal when the vows are fresh in the minds of the participants and limit the services to just the couple.⁷ It can also be conducted after a second marriage, following the realization of the sin. But, regardless of when the service occurs and who is involved, the focus should be on the person or couple to demonstrate the act of repentance and God's forgiveness. The need is to educate the Church in this process, but to minister to the hurting person who experienced the divorce.

The suggestion for the ceremony would be as follows:

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:1-8

Prayer of Confession

Scripture Reading: Romans 3:21-26

Prayer of Committal

Scripture Reading: Psalm 103:1-14

(If denominational practices permit, Communion could be given to the person or couple.)

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing on the New Marriage

Discussion Questions

1. What are some possible obstacles a church would face in supporting forgiveness to divorced members?
2. Is it easier to forgive a criminal than a person who divorces and remarries? Why?
3. What role does the church play in the restoration process?
4. Could you, as a member of the church, support the Service of Forgiveness? Why or why not?

⁷ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church*, 138.

5. Is forgiveness and restoration different if the divorced person is a minister?
6. Some denominations require a pastor to “step down for a season” following a divorce. Is this a good practice? How long should the period be? What should be accomplished during this period?

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